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***THE PRISON.***

**A Dialogue.**



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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# THE PRISON.

*A DIALOGUE.*

BY

H. B. BREWSTER.



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## Speakers.



CLIVE, *a supernaturalist.*

BERYL, *a neo-Christian maiden.*

CROY, *a positivist.*

GERALD, *a wise man.*



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# THE PRISON.

## A Dialogue.



CLIVE.

I want to read you some fragments of a journal that has come into my possession. I think they will interest you. And yet I must ask you to listen with indulgence.

BERYL.

Why?

CLIVE.

Because they are the records of a man who, by the force of circumstances, was exclusively occupied with his own thoughts and feelings.

BERYL.

So, too, are most poets ; yet some of them are quite readable.

CLIVE.

Ah ! poets are privileged. He who wishes to sing may shut his ears and listen to the voices



within. But he who wishes to reason must listen to the conversation around him, take it up where the last speaker left it, catch the tone of the house and say what he has to say in the style of the day. Otherwise, though he may interest a few inquisitive minds who have the key to his thoughts, he talks in the desert.

BERYL.

That is so true that I have wondered sometimes at one thing : how is it that some men—take Spinoza for instance—have shut themselves up in their room, sat down face to face with the problem of life, and there, in their solitude, worked out an answer that has influenced many generations ?

CROY.

I opened Spinoza's *Ethics* the other day and this is what I read :

“Book iv., proposition 44. Love and desire are capable of excess.

“Demonstration. Love is a joy (by definition 6) accompanied by the idea of an exterior cause. Therefore (by scholium to proposition 11, book iii.) titillation is love accompanied by the idea of an exterior cause. Consequently (by proposition 43, book iv.) love is capable of excess.”

If such stuff were written seriously to-day—and I am told the great Dutch Jew was not a humorist—what kind of recognition would it meet with? What kind of titillation would it excite in the public?

BERYL.

I am afraid the public would be as irreverent as you are.

GERALD.

Yet we cannot laugh away the fact that the book has seemed eloquent to many, among whom there are great names; Goethe's to begin with. Perhaps Spinoza said something that many have wished to say and have been glad to recognize, however quaint the language.

CLIVE.

And then he took part in the conversation of his day; he fastened on to Descartes who had deeply stirred opinion. Besides, his solitude was after all comparative. He was in correspondence with noteworthy men. He was not a prisoner.

BERYL.

A prisoner! Do you mean to say that the journal you are going to read to us is the journal of a prisoner—a real prisoner?

CLIVE.

Oh ! he is not entirely illiterate.

BERYL.

A criminal ? And how did you get hold of it ?

CROY.

There is something suspicious here. I suppose Clive purchased in some out-of-the-way place a mysterious-looking old cabinet, and while he was examining it, to his great astonishment a secret drawer flew open, disclosing a bundle of faded papers with a miniature and a stiletto. Or he stumbled on the manuscript in a haunted library, and had it translated from the Arabic as Cervantes did—fortunately for us—with that of Sid Hamed ben Engeli.

CLIVE.

Perhaps I did. It is of no importance. You may credit whom you choose with the authorship of the fragments I wish to submit to you.

BERYL.

But I would like to know. I have no doubt they will interest me ; but it helps one to understand if one knows who the author is and something about him.

CLIVE.

All that it is necessary to know can be gathered from the pages. Apparently he is convinced of his innocence, and for some reason or other not given, he is treated with consideration.

GERALD.

Well, begin. Must we listen in silence or may we ask for explanations ?

CLIVE.

You may interrupt whenever you like ; it is fragmentary. And I, on my side, shall skip a good deal. It is not necessary that we should follow our prisoner day by day ; it is not a captive's lament or a diary, but a certain sequence of thoughts that I want to show you. I have marked for reading the passages that seemed to me to carry on the thread,—though sometimes it is so faint that we shall have to strengthen it. Indeed, I may as well confess beforehand that I shall have a good deal to add in my own name. The fact is that in thinking over these tracks of an eager, troubled mind, I have been fascinated by the questions they skirt,—and here I sit with something to read and something to say which I trust you will be kind enough to elicit by intelligent remarks.

GERALD.

But what is it all about? Couldn't you give us a general outline, so that we should have some notion of the direction in which we are to throw out our intelligent remarks?

CLIVE.

I think I must borrow the answer of Abbé Gratry who advised one of his disciples to take the habit of writing daily; on the young man's asking what he had better write about, he replied: "My son, you have no choice; there is only one subject." Well, it is about that.

CROY.

Then I am afraid I shall not understand a word of it.

CLIVE.

We are aware of your affectations.

This might do to begin with. You must fancy a man in solitary confinement.

(Reading.)

- I. *I think the worst is over. Sometimes I am almost reconciled with my lot. It is no senseless accident; it had to be. I was born with my prison within me; I have secreted it unconsciously during years, and there it stands now,*

*suddenly visible to all, a hard massive shell with something small that stirs in it and that I call myself.*

*They have thrown me in this tower and barred the windows and bolted the doors; they have taken my liberty from me, and my good name and the faces of those I loved and the sound of human voices, everything in the world except the sunlight and the sky and the footfall of the sentinel on the battlements; they have utterly bereaved me,—or they think they have; and I thought so too at first. I have lain face downward with my hands clenched till it hurt me to open them again; I have lain for hours unable to move and as one who is bleeding to death, inwardly repeating that bitterest of all cries: Unjust, unjust! It is over now. I have more than forgiven,—I have understood.*

BERYL.

He is innocent!

CLIVE (reading).

*Ah, if hours such as the one I am now writing in could but last the livelong day! If there were no gnawing desire, no restlessness, no dark annihilation—only this lucid peace! I will tame these hours and teach them to come when I whistle for them, as other prisoners tame spiders or mice.*

*They treat me kindly after all, as kindness goes with gaolers. This is neither a dismal dungeon nor an attic under the leads. I have a few books, and am allowed to write. There are things to grow fond of in the room; an old spinet, voiceless, or worse than that, but dear to look at; a crucifix on the wall (we have met again!) and the portrait of an unknown girl. Also a quaint table and an oaken arm-chair. These are my friends and my treasures.*

*Thus end those who wrap themselves up in themselves and brood on their thoughts. Dante met somewhere in hell a man whose crime seems to have been that he did not love the sweet light of day. Surely this man is typical of a race, and the sweet light of day means the world of men and women with their thousand little interests which I despised. My outward fate has fashioned itself into a symbol. As we illustrate our thoughts by metaphors of a more sensuous eloquence, so do we illustrate our innermost structure by the events of our life—idyls or grim tragedies made flesh by the power of our dreams. Now, then, I fold my arms and abash your stare O sullen walls! In what have you triumphed over me? Adsum qui feci.*

CROY.

This is very strange. A man must be sorely off for consolation who can take comfort in the fancy that his fate in this world is only an illustration of his thoughts. Your prisoner has an over-excited brain. He will see visions shortly.

GERALD.

He is only saying of himself, and his own affairs in particular, what idealists have said of man and his relation to the world in general.

CROY.

Oh, those are sayings which do no harm as long as they apply to mankind and the universe; it is tacitly understood that they are a form of romancing. But a man who applies them to himself and his real surroundings is on the road to madness.

CLIVE.

Here is your answer :

*(Reading.)*

- II. *I am miserably vanquished, and I will not add to my disgrace the mockery of a pride that refuses to acknowledge defeat. How we cheat ourselves*



*with words ! we think we have mastered for ever when we have hushed for a minute with some fond lullaby the pain that ever returns. The wild yearning for freedom has returned. Surely it was a stranger that spoke yesterday in my name the words of a dreamer and a stoic. Who is this who drapes himself in mystic haughtiness within me and gives the lie to my honesty ?*

*So deep is my trouble, that to cheat it away I would foolishly invert the order of the universe, look upon the implacable machinery of causes and effects by which we are helplessly dragged about, as a mere allegory of which the fashion of my own mind is the substance ; I would reject as empty visions all that men call reality, take myself for centre of all existence, exalt myself to the dignity of creator, and descend, I suppose, with the entire pageant of the universe into the little grave which sooner or later the gaoler will dig for me in the corner of his garden !*

*Behold the worm exclaiming to the heel that crushes it : " I thank thee, for thou art the symbol of my thoughts. I myself have called thee on my own head ; thou art the minister of my will."*

*Hold thy tongue, fool, and die !*

*A Dialogue.*

II

CROY.

I am glad to hear him speak like that. He is honest. There is some hope for him.

BERYL.

I do not know where you find it. What hope is there for one buried alive? It is only religion that could help him, and apparently he is not a believer.

CLIVE.

III. You will see :

*(Reading.)*

*I cannot get over this thought ; it haunts me ; if there is no future life our notion of self is false. It is a survival empty and meaningless, without the belief which it survives.*

*Granted he be dreaming, he at least dreams consistently who consoles himself for defeat in this world by the belief in a hereafter. He can accept as a probation the iniquitous and the inexplicable. There is a self within him on whom these things are no outrage ; he can say to his foe, " You have conquered," and yet not loathe the breath of his own nostrils. He falls only to rise the higher, and be he ever so low in the dust he keeps alive within him as a divine pride that sense of a meaning in*

*his life, to live without which is only hiding from death.*

*I, too, strive to find a meaning to this prison. It has mastered me; but unless I can say to it, "Yet my true work is going on," what shall I do but curse the day I was born?*

BERYL.

It is quite true.

CROY.

I do not wish to make light of his misfortune, and I know that it is easy for those who are not in trouble to say, Cheer up. Yet some men in the same circumstances have managed to keep their heads above water. Charles d'Orléans was twenty-five years in prison, and instead of curses he wrote his charming ballads. You may say that our prisoner is not a poet. But he seems to be a man who understands the management of words; he can write; and he has books in his room. He is not chained by the waist to a pillar with rats and darkness around him; and he is not starving.

CLIVE.

It is hard to live by bread alone. But you

must not imagine that I am going to read you a long malediction.

As for books, there is a passage in which he speaks of them rather curiously. I will read it to you because it betrays a peculiar state of mind. You must consider that he is like a man who has been stunned by a fearful blow and who is struggling to regain his consciousness. His first thought is "who am I?" And we all know that as long as a man's attention, for whatsoever reason it be, is centred on himself, he turns away from books.

CROY.

Why! look at the girl who reads a novel a day. Her own person is the only thing that interests her.

GERALD.

Not as a problem though. She looks at, but not into, herself.

CLIVE.


This is the passage :

*(Reading.)*

IV. *My books bear me scant company ; they seem to*

*have faded. Some of them which I read with great pleasure in former days sound very strange in here; meagre and forlorn as the voice of a chorister quivering alone in a deserted choir. They used to sound otherwise. Books are written for classes of people; some for lovers and some for scholars; some for the active and some for the pious. No books are written for men; nobody has time to be a man. As long as we mingle with others we are unconscious choristers; a division of labour which we do not suspect forces us into certain moral and intellectual attitudes. We have a character as we have a station or a calling, because other people have another one. What we term our individuality is just that share of the task which nobody else was there to undertake; "I" means "NOT YOU," and what you are not makes me what I am.*

*In solitude the great difficulty is to recollect who one is, to be any one in particular. The pressure from without is gone and as the blood streams out in too rarified an atmosphere so a solitary consciousness diffuses itself through space till it seems to belong indifferently to every form of thought. I have ceased to belong to any class of men. Whatsoever lives I yearn towards, and all is equally fair to me that lies beyond these moats, that which I used to call good and that which I*



*used to call evil. Whatever lives is sacred. Homo sum. But these authors are agents canvassing for their party. Ah, why is there no real Bible, no book which we can press to our lips, and drink life from it?*

*Wonder brings a smile to my lips when I think of the days in which I have spoken of myself as of a man of this or that character. Was I such indeed? Perhaps at times. It may have been one of my moods; I know not and care not. Only a few days ago I thought of myself as of a scorner of the earth. What I care for to-day is joyfulness and all that is warm and young; all that I have lost. What shall I care for and who shall I be to-morrow? Which of you is to be my great friend? I turn around and question them in vain, my last companions, the cruelly silent ones. They will never speak—that girlish face on the wall (all that remains, doubtless, of some laughter-loving maiden), that cracked and old-fashioned warbler of minuets, nor there on his mouldering cross the Dreamer.*

GERALD.

I think it is a good remark that we have a definite notion of self, thanks only to our perception of others. A person who has no chance of saying *you*, must finish by attaching a very

vague meaning to the word *I*. Perhaps we are made up of a lot of little bits that are held together, as the prisoner says, by the pressure of our surrounding fellow-creatures. It is the socialistic idea applied to psychology.

BERYL.

And, of course, if it is the true doctrine, a man condemned to perpetual prison is worse than dead. Or is he to console himself with the thought that Society must have prisoners as children must have the measles, and that he is fulfilling a necessary function? It is an idea we can play with when nothing ails us except a little vague melancholy; but to those who are really afflicted it must sound as a mockery.

CLIVE.

He seems to incline towards your opinion. I will read you a passage in which he tries to discover what help can be got from the thought that we live for others.

(*Reading.*)

- V. *Of all the troubles of men this is the chief: nothing remains of yesterday. We somehow get through some sixteen hours; then we sleep. And to-morrow we must begin again, and the day after*

*once more. The same moods that swept over us will return and chase each other as before. It is an endless drifting of clouds over a barren moor. Only the clouds which once were white and fanciful lose their outline and their brightness till they melt in gloom.*

*Then we are dead. Some one gives the machinery a push, and day breaks over another waste ; our place is filled. It was so with our fathers and will be so with those that come after us. Nothing remains ; nothing grows.*

*I write these cheerless words and listen with pleasure to the scratching of the pen that breaks the silence of my chamber. Yet even as I write I hear a protest within, warning me that they are the words of a captive, of one cut off from works. I remember the saying of Buddha ; works alone are imperishable. It is a modern view, too ; we are supposed to live for our fellow-creatures and for posterity as our ancestors lived for us. Shall we not be grateful to the dead ? The world is very beautiful ; and if they have not made all its beauty, at least they have enabled us to feel it ; without their inheritance we might at the present moment be gnawing bones in a cave. Many things remain : statues and books and cathedrals and songs ; wisdom and good manners, kind deeds, even a kind look. Effects survive. Many things grow ; empires*



*grow, science grows, even wealth can grow ; all is not ephemeral.*

*And yet I am not satisfied with this doctrine of eternal works. It is the evangel of the happy few whose works are masterpieces, but it will not apply to our dealings with those around us nor to the bulk of the legacy of centuries. If our forefathers have made the world beautiful or made us keen to its beauty, so too have they made it ugly or made us keen to its ugliness. And the gain and the loss are equal. If our good deeds last, so too must our bad ones. We do our neighbours as much harm as good, even as they do to us ; and perhaps most harm when we strive to do most good. It is a poor consolation for our brevity that our mistakes will continue to work hot mischief long after we are cold and stark ; that our blunders innumerable, our weakness which we took for kindness, our cruelty which we took for justice, our fanaticism which we took for earnestness, our levity which we took for tolerance,—that all this or its effects will survive us no less surely than will our wisest deeds, some of which have perhaps cost us remorse. It is very well for those who have some great talent to say : “ By our works we last ; life is no drifting of clouds,” for out of the multitude of their deeds some are of exquisite quality and so fashioned that they hang together and increase ; something*

*has been made and something will remain. But we, the millions who have no talent, who raise no structure, perhaps not even so modest a one as an accumulation of money or of learning—it were a derision for us to boast that we last, merely because the play of cause and effect is eternal. This does not save us from destruction. It is not enough to tell me that my actions will go on bearing fruit for ever, and that therefore nothing is insignificant. Unless some firm tie so connect the hours of my life that they all belong as different phases to one same growth, or as different scenes to a well-knit drama, what matters it that to-day perish at midnight or that its traces be ineffaceable. I say that if all my strivings are not gathered into an imperishable sheaf, these successive and aimless efforts, these impulses, these moods whereof I live from hand to mouth, do not gain a whit of dignity or significance for all the dust they may raise. Clouds of dust are but clouds of dust, however far they may blow.*

BERYL.

Oh! I have great hopes for him.

GERALD.

I see. This time he is seeking for some principle of unity within himself.

CROY.

It is strange how he seems tormented by a sense of his own shapelessness and incoherence. Of course I can understand that in the absence of all contact with other men he should lose, to a certain extent, the notion of his own outline. But why need he at every turn of thought fly off towards some more or less mystical doctrine—idealism or socialism or religion—as though without their assistance he would crumble away and vanish? As long as his body is there, there will be a co-operation of tissues and of cells. Therein consists his moral individuality: it neither presupposes a soul nor depends on the company of men. It depends on its physical substructure.

BERYL.

No, that does not suffice. If my moral and my physical self are one, then my end is utter ruin.

CROY.

Perhaps it is. Must the truth necessarily be joyful?

BERYL.

At least it must be such that, knowing it, we can continue to live reasonably—unless, indeed, you invite us to throw up the game entirely and

die at once, or to live at random. Why should we behave in one way and not in another? why should we strive for anything in preference to anything else, if the end of it all is naught? Any ethics you may propose will only be a system of delayed bankruptcy? Why delay it? A little sooner or a little later, what matters it when the end is the same? Folly is as good as wisdom for those who are sure to lose. Why should I sooner lean on a rock than on a reed if they both rest on a quicksand?

GERALD.

That is very good as an argument, Beryl; but in practice we see many persons who believe that when they die it is the end, and who yet live wisely and well. Some of them, doubtless, think of the community and pay themselves with the idea of its survival. They want to add something to the joint estate. Others do not even seek this justification for their wise behaviour. Their instincts suffice them. They do not ask for ultimate reasons; they do not care for the sum total. In each individual case they act with discretion, and if you inquire for their motive, sometimes they will call it pleasure, and include in the word things not usually thought of under that name—effort, for instance,

and self-restraint;—sometimes they will confess a lofty aim, a high ambition. What is finally to become of their pleasure, or what the value of a high ambition may be in the last appeal, are questions in which they take no interest, and which, if forced upon their notice, they will examine for a moment as they would a curious riddle, content to give it up should it prove troublesome. If you show them that they are irrational, they will good-humouredly answer, "So it seems," and forthwith go on their way as quietly and surefootedly as before. You cannot explain this by calling them fools; some of them are extremely able, and some of them very worthy men. All we can say is that a certain kind of intelligence is dormant in them, which if active might lead them, as it leads you, to admit some principle of unity other than the body. Whether that principle is the soul our fathers believed in—the individual soul—or the one we are told our descendants will revere—the collective soul of the community—is a question apart.

CLIVE.

Shall I go on?

BERYL.

Yes, do.

CLIVE.

(*Reading.*)

VI. *To-day this seems to me the most wonderful thing in the world: the healing power of thought. No matter what our trouble is, and however wretched we may be, even to the hunger fever of utter solitude or the wracking of bodily pain (so at least the story of the martyrs proclaims), there is some thought somewhere which, if we could only lay hold of it, would instantly lull us to rest or revive us out of prostration. What is this mysterious virtue? Is there a miracle greater than this: just a few words murmured from I know not where, and the troubled waters are calmed, the blind see, the lame take up their bed and walk, and the dead arise from the grave. Who speaks these words?*

He breaks off there abruptly, and then he adds: (*reading*)

*There is this inexplicable character of the days of our lifetime, that taken separately they may be such common ware as glass beads; threaded together they turn into precious pearls.*

*But how shall I thread them together?*

BERYL.

I know what you are reading to us ; it is the story of the awaking of a soul.

CLIVE.

You will find that description insufficient later on. And do not expect a steady progression. I have tried to select the passages that show the main line. But he moves on and off it. He advances and then comes back on his thoughts ; affirms and denies. Perhaps we all do. At present he is trying the ground.

(Reading.)

VII. *I have taken to thinking once more over old questions which I had put aside long since as settled. What about the soul ? Like most men of these times I have crossed it out of the list of my beliefs on the strength of this argument : we have no knowledge of minds without bodies, of thoughts without brains behind them ; then by what right can we assume that when the material organization is destroyed the spiritual organization persists ?*

*Perhaps some one knows a good answer to this argument. I have not found it. All I can feebly say is that the limit of our knowledge is not the limit of reality, and that what we have no right to assume may yet perchance be. A weak reply.*

*It may prove that the soul cannot be disproved ;  
it does not justify a faith nor change the balance  
of probabilities.*

And the very next day he writes :

*(Reading.)*

VIII. *We have been told long since to eat, drink and be merry, ere we die. We have been told by some to weigh, measure and dissect, all the rest being waste of time. And we have been told by others to start co-operative stores and popular banks lest our hearts be empty and our desire wither to dust. Yet we go on listening when we awake to something within us which is as the tuning of instruments, and until they have all found their right pitch we have no will to work. We still feel that, bustle about as we may among men and things, we remain woefully alone unless we carry within us a companion, one whose praise is food for which we crave and whose rebuke is anguish. Surely it is this presence that binds together the desultory hours and prevents us living as madmen, for whom the link is broken that connects the past with to-day, and to-day with to-morrow. And surely, too, though its shadow has often fallen on my threshold it has no abode in me. The freedom*



*I foolishly long for, would not heal me of the greater solitude.*

CROY.

I told you he would see visions before long ! Do you notice how he is beginning to dramatize his moods into personages ; how so simple a thing as a state of inward repose—in his case nothing but the calm that follows a storm—fashions itself with the clay of metaphors into the presence of an unseen companion ? Yet a little and the metaphor will be made flesh. He has reached the stage where myths are created.

GERALD.

I wonder what would remain of all our wealth of ideas if every trace of symbolical impersonation were effaced.


BERYL.

Please don't discuss just now. I want to hear the prisoner's voice.

CLIVE.

*(Reading.)*

IX. *Slowly and silently the hours have passed, first the hours in whose aching emptiness the same*



*heavy word swings as a pendulum ceaselessly to and fro: nothing, nothing, nothing; then the hours of foolish, tender, self-pity that must be a remainder of childhood, and that, like sorrowful children, find comfort in the excess of their grief. The light has changed on the wall, mellowed and glowed and faded; the silence is deeper than ever; it is dusk, almost night. I know not what delicate air floats in and out by the window, and seems to bear me away and yet leave me greater than before. And now, clearer than I have ever felt it, a strange feeling comes over me: I am not alone. It is as though the very core of me had been missing and now I had found it; and at the same time as though this deepest and most intimate ME stood outside me so that I would fling my arms round him as a lover. Also he seems to me quite above my troubles, unaffected by my individual lot, impersonal, the same in all men and yet ME.*

*Perhaps it is this that the Christians call Christ.*

BERYL.

Incipit vita nova.

CROY.

There is one thing I want to know: is this

simply the story of a mind ? or are you giving us under a disguised form . . . . how shall I say . . . ?

BERYL.

Psychological evidences of Christianity.

CROY.

Precisely.

CLIVE.

I am simply relating.

BERYL.

Of course; and let your story be for Croy nothing but one of the tales with which travellers wile the evening away; but let it be for others the story of stories, the tale of those who have followed the road they too wish to follow.

GERALD.

May I ask what is exactly meant by the psychological evidences of Christianity ?

BERYL.

I mean this. Why should we not account for our beliefs by facts of inward experience accessible to all ? Why not explain our great dogmas by the story of their growth in the individual, apart

from any sanction of tradition, apart from any historical questions, and apart from metaphysical speculation ?

GERALD.

I understand. You do not care for proofs of the existence of God for instance ; and you care as little for the authority of the Book or of the Church. You wish to feel a certain presence in yourself and to tell others how you came to feel it.

BERYL.

Yes.

GERALD.

I am afraid you are one of those minds Clive spoke of when we began, whose ingenious ways are little heeded because the tastes of the century incline elsewhere. What people hunger for at present is not a revelation of what goes on in them daily, but an exact and trustworthy narrative of what happened two thousand years ago in Judæa, as established by the comparison of texts and the determination of their authorship. Do you not perceive how very much more interesting this is ? Why ! anybody can have a soul if it comes to that, but it takes a scholar to fix accurately the date of an interpolation.

BERYL.

Oh ! that is a momentary fashion. The next generation will weary of it.

CROY.

For my part I am content as long as I may listen as I would to any other story, and I am quite willing that this one should tell us of a pilgrim's path, provided my sympathy does not pledge me to follow him to the Sepulchre. If I do my best to be tolerant and friendly, do not take advantage of it to urge that I too ought to find within me the ideal self in which you or your friend may delight.

CLIVE.

But firstly, O most impatient of men, you do not know what results he will arrive at. And secondly, a few moments' attention would have shown you that he himself pauses critically, and seeks to trace the history of his thoughts ; you can accept the history without having to live through it on your own account.

CROY.

We listen.



CLIVE.

(Reading.)

X. *The same in all men and yet Me. Yes, these words correctly express what I feel. And they have I know not what sound of bygone years that makes their novelty half familiar to me. Perhaps I have known them before and had forgotten them; perhaps I have long listened for them as one in foreign countries listens for voices that are not there.*

*I was a stranger in the land even as a child. I think I lived for years as one who is dreaming and who knows that he is dreaming, and yet cannot wake up. Around me were men who had no such feeling. They were wonderfully awake. They had their joys and their sorrows which they referred unhesitatingly to given circumstances and tangible causes. No question as to the reality of the whole scene crossed their minds; no dull sense of its incompleteness numbed their faculties as mine were numbed; nor did they know anything of a delight apparently without cause, to bathe in which I courted solitude. Quick as true metal they responded directly to every touch from without. But with me, the sound turned inwards and awakened echoes that would not cease; as soon as one had subsided it was taken up farther back as*

*a cry wandering through corridors, and raising whispers ever more remote from the immediate world, ever of more general and abstract import. I was an instrument so made that in its response to the world, the world counted for very little and the structure of the instrument for nearly all. And as it was then so is it now: a tyrannical consciousness of my own structure rebels against everything that is around me and makes it all seem as a vain show. And such it must remain unless the core of Me, the innermost self of myself, is also the core of everything, the self of everyone else, so that seeking inward I may grasp the essence of that which is without. I am cut off from all contact unless I am the image of God. I am cut off from the universe if the universe is not the image of Me. I stretch out my hungry arms and they enfold but shadows, if in what they clasp there is no answer to this great cry of love in which I recognize myself, and in which I melt away. What furious and divine selfishness is this, that asserts and sacrifices itself at the same moment; that refuses to hear of aught but itself and resolves itself into allhood? And why do my lips taste to me of infinite space and time?*

*I am perplexed and weary. A few months ago I would have brushed away these thoughts as idle fancies. The living have no time. When the*

*windows are ablaze with light, who cares where the street ends or how dark the moor beyond? But I who stand at the dreary outskirts and have no hope of turning back into the throng, I strain my eyes in the black solitude. I strain my ears in this awful silence, and it is life or death to me if the forms I see are real or imaginary, if the sound I think I hear is the beating of the blood in my temples or the distant pipe of my clan.*

*Am I or am I not alone?*

GERALD.

It is not very easy to keep pace with him.

CLIVE.

Oh, I know it. And this particular passage implies, I think, a theory over which I have had to puzzle a little; for our prisoner—not unnaturally, since he is writing for himself—fancies the reader knows all about his thoughts. As several of his sayings further on point back to this theory and are obscure without it, I have given myself the trouble to reconstruct it in outline, and this is what I make out. You will understand that I am merely giving you a rough ideal sketch, such as might serve to illustrate the principle of a machine;—not its plan.



He apparently assumes then that our brain is fashioned, so to speak, in a series of strata, such that each successive stratum draws an abstract proof of the picture presented on the preceding one. And further, that this march of increasing abstraction is the cause of our notion of Law and Unity, both moral and in nature. He holds that no notion of unity is given to us by our first impressions; around us and within us we at first discern nothing but a plurality of individual and disconnected cases; then we recollect them and immediately they begin to reveal equalities and analogies, they group themselves into classes and fall under precedents. And these analogies or class characters seem to him a contribution of the second stratum of the brain—that on which memory began; they are not perceived, they are superinduced characters.

CROY.

How is that? I don't see that the skeleton of vertebrate animals—which is their class character—is a contribution of the second stratum of my brain! It belongs to them just as much as their skin, or their feathers, or any part of them. I have not superinduced anything at all; I have gone on perceiving.

CLIVE.

I suppose he would answer that every individual skeleton belongs to an individual animal and may be the object of a direct perception ; but that the skeleton you speak of as a class character belongs to no one in particular, is nowhere situated and therefore cannot be perceived. It can only be remembered. It is an abstraction, a creation of your memory.

GERALD.

That is elementary. Go on.

CLIVE.

Well, then, he seems to have reasoned thus : Our next step is to abstract from memories—if you will allow me to make use of this word as much more convenient than “reminiscences;”—we treat them just as we treated our first perceptions ; we neglect dissimilarities, retaining or rather contributing something not hitherto present in our parallel cases, and which reveals itself to us as a common law, a common design, or a common substance.

Now it is clear that at each of these steps we are drawing more and more largely on our own structure ; our organs are doing, as it were, an increasing amount of work on a relatively

decreasing amount of food. If we ascribe to our organism a certain share in our first perceptions, that share must be doubled in our first recollections and quadrupled in the next stage of abstraction; the activity of the subject is increasing while the aliment drawn from without has remained positively the same and is therefore dwindling into insignificance as fast as the contribution of memory grows.

A moment comes in this process when the subject ceases to be conscious of anything but his own organism; only, as each step of the process has been an ascending abstraction, this self-consciousness appears to him as a universal law, an all-underlying structure or an all-containing substance—God under one name or another.

At least this is, I believe, the line of meditation which our prisoner must have taken. He is aware of the too great part his Self has always played in his thoughts, and he is half afraid of its last development as of a hallucination. At the same time he is fascinated by the extraordinary turn taken at the last moment by what he calls this "furious and divine selfishness that asserts and sacrifices itself at the same moment." He would fain believe that what he has found within himself is not void of firm reality. And

here are a few lines which will show you that I have followed him closely enough.

(*Reading.*)

XI. *But what proves that when the activity of the subject is doubled, that which he discerns corresponds less than what he discerned before to that which is? It corresponds less to that which is, if we judge of that which is by what we see and touch. But why should I not, on the contrary, assume that the greater the share of the subject the greater the amount of reality known? If my senses are dull I shall learn but little of nature. If they are keen I may learn a great deal. Yet she is the same in both cases; the difference is in me. The more I give the more I shall get back; and if there is more of me in my memories and abstractions than in my perceptions, there will also be more reality in them. The deeper the call I make on my own structure the broader the revelation, and if what I reach at last is Unity, though it be my own image, it is none the less that of God.*

CROY.

Do you think there are many people whose belief in God depends on a chain of abstractions?

I can fancy a recluse drawing on his metaphysical genius till he is entirely bound up in what you call the march of memories, and I rather like the idea that the notion of a supreme unity to which it leads is in reality a tremendous self-affirmation ;—but I think those are rare cases. The people we see around us are not fanatical logicians. They certainly do not soar from concept to concept. They have trouble enough in keeping their ideas together as much as is needful to understand the easy half of their newspaper. They believe in God because, as they acutely remark, a watch supposes a watchmaker. Perhaps, too, because they are accustomed to see a sovereign at the head of a State and a father at the head of a family. Then, again, they are like little children, and they want to think that there is some one who takes care of them. Often they are very touching. They want to be able to thank someone while there is nobody near them to thank, and very little to thank for. Well, at least they are sure not to be answered rudely. But I do not see much abstraction in all this.

GERALD.

You might have added that many believe simply because they are told to. But I suppose

the reason and origin of the faith must be sought in the teachers.

CLIVE.

Undoubtedly. Yet it is true, as you, Croy, say, that among those in whom the belief is genuine and home-spun there are very few who have wrought it out of progressive generalizations. That is the metaphysician's road. Let us put it aside for the moment. And don't let us heed the watch and watchmaker argument which I take to be an uncouth attempt on the part of those who accept their belief ready made, to persuade themselves that they would have been capable of producing it. Let us come to the ground of belief you spoke of last,—unquestionably the one on which the vast majority of believers stand, and stand so firmly that our advanced party is to-day exclaiming triumphantly exactly what Petrarca wrote with regret five centuries ago: "If things go on this rate there will not be a Christian left in fifty years." I am alluding to the feeling of dependancy and gratitude you spoke of rather contemptuously as "touching." You apparently look upon it as a childish illusion in which it may be well to leave the simple-minded undisturbed, but which the enlightened can afford to smile at. But it may also be looked upon as the ultimate

and admirable product of a psychological process which we all of us push to a certain point—the same process on another field as the one we have seen culminating in the philosophical idea of a supreme unity ; I mean the same march of memories.

You must bear in mind that our successive degrees of recollection are not only ascending abstractions at the end of which an all-embracing reality reveals itself to us in the very moment when we are drawing most from ourselves so that it coincides with our highest self-consciousness,—they are also steps on the road of an inner life that tends to make us independent of our contact with the things of perception and with persons. How these affect us in our primary relations with them becomes of small importance when compared to how they affect us in after thought. The immediate impression is swept away with the hour, but its recollected image is received into a company of memories where it will abide. Its final value, the character it will retain, depends on its relation to this company, The mood which I carry within me, and which is a work of coalesced memories, is more than the impression that comes to me from without, This is so in all men. If it were otherwise life would be unendurable to all those whom we

pity; they can bear it and cling to it because it is not to them what it seems to us; it reaches them through a different film of associations and reminiscences.

I say that in this first phase, the life of moods is present in all men, and has over them some sway great or small. But there are men in whom it reaches a new phase. Their moods themselves leave traces in them on a new deeper-lying stratum of memory whose awakening is signalled by a work of classification and systematization exactly similar to that which, out of less emotional data, evolves a common law, a common design or a common substance. The result of this work is an inward order, a disposition or grouping of feelings such that wherever fate may push me I have at all times something to take care of, something to recollect that will save me from the dispersion of conflicting impulses. I nurture within me a life less accidental than my visible one, less dependent on my individual circumstances since it is abstracted from them, and yet more intimately personal since it has been awakened by a deeper call on my nature; I am most intensely myself in the strivings and joys and warnings that constitute my moral life.

And what if some day these elements are, by



a new and still deeper call on my brain, all collected into a single focus, in a single moment of memory? Then I stand face to face with something so far removed from the world of accident and individual variety that it is to me as the primal nature of all men, the type, the Universal man, and yet by its very genesis *Me*, the framework of my soul, dear to me as the consciousness of my own life; so that the love of myself embraces also those whom a moment before I called "others." So at least can be explained these words of the prisoner :

(*Reading.*)

- XII. *That whereby I AM, that which outlives the fleeting hours and gathers their scattered flock is also that whereby men are brothers; my life is continuous and I am myself instead of a succession of disconnected events, only through that in me which is universal, the same in others as in myself; and the stronger it is in me the closer knit I am; and the closer knit the closer bound to my fellow-creatures.*

BERYL.

Oh ! Clive, I don't know if what you have said is the exact truth of the case ; I think I have not.

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quite understood all of it ; but this I know, that the truth must be something very like what you have said. It is true that our own self-consciousness rises to plenitude in moments of worship. It is true that the careful tending of what seems to us most essentially ourself enables us to see the lovableness of the human beings around us and to gladden at their sight. How does this self-love grow into this charity ? What brings these opposites together ? There must be some explanation such as the one you give ; something in us that finds its counterpart, its visible expression, in the story men listen to century after century, because it reminds them of something—they know not what—that they wanted to say.

GERALD.

Are you always content to look upon the dogmas of religion as a dramatization of the most important processes of the mind ?

BERYL.

Yes, I think I have never cared for the historical value of the story or the scientific accuracy of the assertions. It does not make a bit of difference to me whether these things did or did not happen. Of what use is a historical fact to me ? It is dead and can only interest historians.

But a psychological fact lives for ever and takes place eternally. I am content that such should be the dogmas I believe in.

CROY.

But I want to know if, besides, that they are statements of facts analogous to those of ordinary perception.

BERYL.

I don't. I waive the question as too deep for me,—and not interesting enough. It is a superfluous question to my mind. I do not see what dignity a sensuous or historical reality would add to my beliefs if they have the basis we are speaking of; and if they have not got that basis they are worthless. Suppose it proved that you have a right to say to me, "God is" in the same sense in which we say there are stars and planets;—of what profit is that to me? You might as well din a phrase of Chinese into my ears; it will awaken nothing in me save perhaps a feeling of vague and stultified awe. There is no connection between your assertion and me. The only remark it can properly call for on my part is: "Oh, indeed!" Suppose it proved that on a given date, on a certain spot of the earth, a child was born who was the son of that God, worked

miracles and suffered death at the hands of the Jews—what then? It is certainly wonderful, but not more so than my own presence in the world, not more wonderful than that there should be anything at all to wonder at and anyone to wonder at it. It is not more wonderful than any other fact; there is nothing intimate in it. You tell me of it and I bow my head; but at heart I feel as stupid as though I were being walked through a museum.

But if you show me that certain operations of my mind when carried on long enough result in states of consciousness such that these dogmas are illustrations of what is taking place within me, parables as natural as the innumerable metaphors of which our language is made up, then you begin to interest me; you help me towards those states of consciousness by the mere narrative of their growth; you change what was given me only as a fact calling for passive recognition on debatable grounds, into a sign of creative maturity, wherein part of my nature attains its full development; and, further, you explain to me how it is that, supposing you choose to call these things myths, there can be certain myths which are not handed down to us as idle tales of folklore, but are daily recreated as the lasting ideals of the race.

GERALD.

You understand yourself very well at least.

BERYL.


I wish I did. But I have not said all yet ; and it is so hard to put in order. Because sometimes I think as I have just told you, and at other moments it seems to me as though whatever I may think on the subject is of no importance. A great longing comes over me to feel as other people do, no matter whether they are right or wrong, and I say to myself that this desire—the humble love of catholicity—is the substance of the truth, and all the rest mere shadow.

GERALD.

What ! as wise as that already ?

BERYL.

And again, another thing perplexes me. It is the same objection that Croy urged just now when he said that Clive's theogony might account for a metaphysician's deism, but that very few people made acquaintance with God in that manner. Then Clive said that was true, but he showed us how the same mechanism of memory would, when applied to moods and emotions, lead in a much more popular manner to a similar



result ; and we saw how it has come to pass that by the side of an abstract God, the God of philosophers, we have a Man-God easy to love, and how yet the two are one. But it seems to me that even this more popular path can hardly be trodden by crowds. What we listened to sounded as an account of a very gradual process in very introspective natures. I pictured to myself people who had turned away from life ; I saw a throng of pale reserved faces hearkening to things that those around them hear not.

Yet it is a knowledge known to children, this climax of our prisoner's meditation : " I am myself instead of a succession of disconnected events only through that in me which is universal, the same in all men as in me." Not that they are familiar with the phrase or would understand it ; but the feeling, the certitude which underlies these words is no privilege of people detached from the world ;—you can read it in the eyes of many who are as blithe and careless as young spaniels. It is no fruit of ascetic experience, it is a certain fineness of fibre, and those who have it recognize one another at a glance. They form a brotherhood.


CLIVE.

By right of birth. I grant it and admit your

objection just as I admitted Croy's. But the gift which is inborn in some may have been laboriously acquired by their forefathers. You are thinking of those who have inherited a mental disposition ; my prisoner and I are watching its genesis. And see what a difference that makes : to your mind there can be no such thing as doubt concerning the value of the thoughts and feelings we are speaking of ; they need no justification of any kind ; they can stand surety to themselves as can any talent by the joy and strength that accompany it. You have no wish to test them ; you would sooner use them as tests of any other kind of experience. The idea of giving them additional dignity by claiming that they are images of so-called realities, or of backing them up with historical events, would not have occurred to you. I have no doubt you would as soon think of taking a historian's opinion as to the value of Hamlet. But people whose beliefs are only the foreshadowings of an immature talent, flirt with extrinsic corroboration ; they ask for a sign. Hear the prisoner :

(*Reading.*)

XIII. *I see how my thoughts weave God. I see also how the feeling has grown in me of a superior being at once the essence of myself and the same in*



*all men, an inward aspect of God that the people of these countries call Christ; the soul is no meaningless word to me; it stands for a life the birth of which I have watched; from a ruinous heap of fallen hopes I saw it arise as a quivering delicate flame, and I know that in guarding and feeding it I could forget the past. But what matters it to me that these thoughts should be the outgrowth of my very nature instead of lessons learned by rote, unless they correspond to things which are real, whether I think of them or not, like these walls against which I can dash myself to pieces and yet will they not be moved? I want the truth and will not be consoled with dreams.*

*New feelings and strange forms of thought steal over me; and ere they have secured their hold a smile has driven them away. I sit down to prove their foolishness, and lo! they are leaning over my shoulder and guiding the pen that turns against me. I rise to welcome them and they have vanished.*

*Speak, O conflicting voices. Say your say, whoever you may be; I will fear none of you nor turn away in contempt. Nor shall your contradictions distract me. I have drawn around me a circle of serene contemplation against which you cannot prevail. Speak out; I am the spectator and you are the comedy of a brain.*



Again, a little further, I find an entry that shows how hard it may be for some to solve the difficulty you solve so easily.

(*Reading.*)

- XIV. *Still the question clings: are they allegories, pageants in which certain moods project their own reality, or are they facts revealed in these moods, but distinct therefrom and to doubt which were as foolish as to doubt the outer world?*

*I know there are men who amuse themselves by proving that it is not foolish to doubt the outer world, or at least the existence of anything at all similar to the picture we make of it unto ourselves. They tell us there is no resemblance between the unknown reality and the images which we sum up under the name of Nature. Perhaps. But this cannot help me, nor would it satisfy me in the least to argue that a hallucinated God is as good as a hallucinated world. It would only be playing with words. I turn to these walls that shut me in and I strike them with my hand. If my brain has spun them it cannot unspin them; if they are quite different from what I fancy, they none the less serve their bitter purpose; if they are nothing at all, that nothing is hard enough to deceive me day after day and to deceive all sane men. This suffices; it is a degree of reality with*

*which I am quite content, and which I have no difficulty in distinguishing from my dreams. And what I want to know of God and of my soul is whether they too have this degree of reality or whether they are dreams.*

GERALD.

I understand him better than I do you. You seem to me to set aside very lightly a very serious difficulty. Beryl assures us in an off-hand manner that it is of no importance whatever that a story trusted as absolute truth by millions of men, should rest on facts having the supernatural value attributed to them. You both of you apparently hold that such facts, were they proven, could have no other interest than that of an illustration. The existence of God seems to you at best a confirmation of the thought of God. You will find very few people ready to agree with you. Your myths of self-consciousness, in which the most important acts and states of the mental machine are dramatized or personified, may find acceptance among persons whose wish is to understand how beliefs have arisen; but they will certainly not satisfy those whose wish is to believe. Most men would lose their faith if they thought that their beliefs were not trustworthy

representations of outlying realities ; and what astonishes me is that you should be confirmed and strengthened in yours by an analysis which seems to take away its substance and reduce its objects to mere hallucinations :—appearances due to an excitement of the brain, uncorroborated from without and therefore wrongly credited with any but a purely imaginative existence.

CLIVE.

At all events you express a misgiving which has often troubled our captive, for I find another entry—the last of its kind, it is true—in which he has made a desperate effort to persuade himself that the unity he has been led to confess is not a thought but an outward reality. I hardly know whether I ought to read it to you or to skip it ; it is rather abstruse.

CROY.


Oh ! read it. I have no doubt it will just suit Beryl, who is fresh from Padua ; and for my part I had as lief drown in mid-ocean as in a mill-pond.

CLIVE.

(Reading.)

- XV. *I say that these walls are real to me; I say that they have a degree of persuasiveness which I am content to accept as reality. It needs no effort on my part to credit them with substance, and their qualities are known to me with more than sufficient accuracy. Yet to some microscopic creature they may be the inaccessible horizon, the vaults of heaven. If I were a painter and nothing but a painter, or a geometrician with no human interests save geometry, they would be to me nothing but grey or rectangular surfaces. If I were a pure chemist they would be groups of molecules. Their reality as walls fades away as soon as their use is left out of consideration; nothing remains of them except attributes such as form colour, resistance, weight, and chemical affinities. Nor does anything bind these attributes together; they remain distinct, independent, collected by chance. And if I consider these attributes separately, they in their turn resolve themselves into vibrations within me or without; there is no substance to them, they melt into a dance of atoms; and these atoms nobody has seen or touched them; all that we know of them is that it is convenient to imagine that they exist. And*

*yet all sane men will agree that this is a wall; doubtless because we all of us are acquainted with a broader, a more complex reality, in which such particular collections of attributes serve a definite purpose; and by reference to this purpose, that which without it would only be a form, a colour, or a texture, becomes a wall. I see that innumerable experiences, desires and associations concerning which my conscience is silent while I say of the object before me: it is this, or that,—these it is whence it takes its solidity, its undeniable significance, the same in the judgment of other men as in my own, because certain desires and experiences and associations are common to us. A strange and great gift this, by which we unwittingly refer whatever we are considering to a higher group; a gift by which the field of vision is so adjusted that we are able to attribute substance to that which a more analytical view must decompose into a fortuitous gathering of deceptive appearances;—the very gift of life since, if we were not constantly making use of it, the world would faint away like smoke before our eyes,—if indeed our eyes had not fainted away before-hand. For there is nowhere any such thing as a reality that does not owe its title as such to extraneous considerations and to the postulated previous existence of a reality vaster than itself. There is a voucher behind the very things*



*I touch which imparts to them their apparently intrinsic evidence, and without which they would crumble into a meaningless heap of disconnected perceptions.*

*But must there not also be a warrant for this broader reality which vouches for the immediate one; and, again, a warrant behind that warrant? If men can agree at all, must there not ultimately be a grand warrant the same in all and the framework of each of them?*

*What if it be this that they call God?*

*Then, properly speaking, he is the condition of all reality, and as there is nothing by reference to which we can perceive him as real in the same manner as we perceive other things by ultimate reference to him, his existence must both escape the tests which apply to all other forms of existence and yet be the object of our highest certitude.*

GERALD.

Well, what do you say to it?


CLIVE.

I think he is going a little too fast, as we are apt to when we ride away on an argument. Perhaps when he has returned, and after we have

tried other roads together, we shall be able to admit a certain kind of unity within us and without ; but it will have been reached otherwise and its significance will be different.

Though he starts from the good remark that nothing can be a reality to us without a broader and familiar reality around it, I don't like the way in which he proceeds to dispose realities like the successive layers of a Chinese ball, till at last we reach, or rather cannot reach, but are forced to assume an exterior, all comprising sphere whence reality filters into the included ones.

Abstractions may enfold one another in that regular way, but realities do not. They soon dovetail, and so do our apprehensions of them. The bigger reality which imparts its dignity to the smaller one, is not a homogeneous background behind which we shall have to seek a larger one still ; it is a screen of countless wings so disposed as to present only a given surface ; as soon as we convey our attention from the foreground to the background, the screen is shuffled ; the surface which previously served as foil takes the place of the object it set off and stands out against a new disposition of the wings among which we will recognize after the operation has been repeated a few times, the first little reality from which we started.



This implies doubtless that the whole screen hangs together somehow. But it also implies that no thought is nearer to that unity than another, just as no step a man makes on a treadmill brings him nearer than the preceding one to the top of the wheel. The top is just the place where he is not treading; the foil that gives reality is just the surface on which our eyes are not focussed. Therefore we cannot rise, as our prisoner wants to, from A to B and thence to C, till we reach a letter that includes the whole alphabet. It is true he admits that we cannot pronounce it; he calls it a condition of reality. But he also thinks of it as a reality in itself which—without ever quite reaching it—we can approach ever more in a given direction, that is to say, by help of those abstractions partly metaphysical, partly emotional, that have played hitherto so important a part in his mind. There I dissent.

GERALD.

Then I return to my question: What possible value can beliefs have that are not representations of outlying realities?

CLIVE.

The value of symptoms of a certain structure of the subject. That is also a kind of reality.



Formal if you will, but not illusory. You speak of appearances uncorroborated from without as of hallucinations. But suppose one of these appearances to be catholic, I mean suppose it depends on structural characters of the organism so essential that in a more or less developed state these characters are necessarily present in every human being—will you still call it a hallucination? You have no test of the reality of anything save this one: the constancy and universality with which the human organism reacts in a given way in given cases.

What you term the corroboration from without is only one of the forms of a test which is essentially an appeal from a limited experience to a wider one, from a transient impression to a durable one, from the individual to the race. Why should not the consciousness of its own mental structure be one of the cases in which the human organism reacts catholicly? The fact that this consciousness is unequally developed in men, possibly quite dormant in many, is no disproof. There are savages who cannot count beyond four, and that does not weaken mathematical certitude.

GERALD.

But we do not endow numbers with an

existence of their own; we do not make immaterial creatures of them; and if we speak of their properties it is not in a Pythagorean sense.

CLIVE.

There you mark at a stroke the attitude which I believe we ought to take towards the great affirmations of our religion; treating them neither as though they corresponded to outlying realities, nor as illusory, but as forms of thought by the assistance of which we can open fields of culture, otherwise inaccessible.

BERYL.

Part of this is not clear to me.

CROY.

Then you are to be envied for the rest. I will tell you what is clear to me: we are running after butterflies that have lost their interest for modern men. Formal realities and catholic hallucinations can, I have no doubt, be themes of endless meditations.

But we don't want them. Above all we don't want the fields of spiritual culture which they are to open to us. We have come to the conclusion that these fields only grow mystical weeds, narcotic herbs on which men deaden their healthy hunger with dreams. The irresistible

trend of all that is young and strong in the world is directly against spirituality. If there is anything great in our times, it is the revival of the flesh, the rehabilitation of animal wants, the bread of life understood literally, the pity and tenderness of the body for the body reducing to a mere sentimental luxury in public conscience the care of the soul for the soul.

I suppose I should be ignominiously turned out of this noble company if I did not bring forward some philosophical justification for tendencies that are quite strong enough to dispense with any. Out of consideration then for the tone of the house I will say this.

Ever since Clive began reading to us, we have, as far as I understand, been turning round and twisting in and out of three main ideas: Unity, Personality, and Eternity. And the drift of it all seems to be that though it may be difficult to accept the old doctrines under their old form and impossible to justify them any longer in the old dogmatic manner, yet in substance they are not far wrong; that it is very desirable we should continue to believe in an all-embracing unity, about the nature of which we are still in the dark, but which is present also in us, forms there our true personality and so gives us, besides a principle of moral organization, some kind of hold on the

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eternity that belongs to it in its other, its exterior aspect. Finally, that all this can be established very satisfactorily by a few simple remarks on memory.

Now in opposition to all this a good many people are of opinion that eternity is out of our depth and that the less we think about it the less time we shall lose ; that ultimate or supreme unity is a question that men of science—chemists, physicists and biologists—can fight out among themselves and decide as they like without its mattering much to the public ; and finally that the unity of the individual is in fact something that does not bear any resemblance to a spiritual principle.

And there we get to the real brand of discord between us: your notion of personality, like that recognized by religion, is fraught with an incomplete and insincere system of ethics.

We hear a great deal of the demand for rational evidence, scientific proof and so forth. It is only the litigated point. If we want to account for the litigation, for the antipathy which makes the parties quarrel, we must go back to their moral tone, to their general comportment towards life.

BERYL.

I was under the impression that moral tone

was rather the strong point of religion and that the highest claim made by unbelievers was that they could obtain the same results with a smaller expenditure of faith.

CROY.

Those are half-hearted unbelievers. Be sure of this : at the root of it all there is a quarrel between two opposite ethical ideals supported by two different notions of individual unity or personality. You saw how Clive and his friend worked out theirs, starting from this : " There is no direct conscious link between our various endeavours." True enough. I am not directly aware of any connection in me between the impulses that urge me to eat and to walk, or to sleep, sing, laugh, quarrel, make friends, examine how a machine is made, sketch a profile. All these instincts and dozens of others group themselves into one bundle which is me, or I, as you choose. But as far as my direct consciousness is concerned each of them is independent, feels no tie with his neighbours and knows of them only indirectly through memory.

This is the tie presented to us as the principle of individual unity, whereas it is merely the principle of our consciousness of individual unity. There is an unconscious link of vastly

greater importance of which no mention is made. My instincts are bound together by something much stronger than a feeling—by a hard fact, a certain definite mechanism of tissues.

Herein is the true unity, the true thread of which the soul is but an image. And the image is a fraudulent substitute, if it assumes the place of the thing itself, as it does when it undertakes to control, regulate and direct the various impulses; for this is a business that must be done by the real, unconscious unity of our being, the test of which is not a state of blessed and serene consciousness but an amount of activity, a high degree of doing.

He tells you, your dreamer, that the stronger his sense of his own unity, the closer bound he is to his fellow-creatures. Yes, in imagination, even as hermits may have tasted the perfection of human fraternity. But in fact the sensation of our moral unity is the sign of a disruption of the unity itself and in seeking to intensify it we are only giving ourselves up to the most insidious form of atrophy.

GERALD.

There may be something in that.

CROY.

The ideal of the secular world is in it. Of

course some other account than Clive's might be given of this self-conscious personality on which spiritual religions, whatever name they go under, found their various devices for overcoming ephemerality and isolation. Instead of the consciousness of the subject gradually outweighing his responsiveness, instead of a life of memories developing at the cost of direct impressions and leading to the idea of a unique God or to the feeling of a universal man type imprint in us and constitutive of our true self, we might, I dare say, have the same thing presented to us from some other standpoint. But it would always be the same thing, the same story of a mainspring in us of divine nature, under whose regulating impulse the rest of our machinery is to work, the same starving ethics shivering in one little corner of human nature and fiercely condemning or blindly forgetting all the rest,—ever clamouring for restrictions, ever hankering for that which cannot be and equally incapable of changing or of sanctioning that which is.

BERYL.

You seem to think that we must be either Puritans or Secularists. But there are a few people who manage to be neither.

CROY.

Doubtless. You might also say that a


doctrine cannot be so narrow which is accepted by persons of all classes, by the merchant and the soldier as well as by the statesman and the peasant. But when we come to examine why they so readily accept a one-sided religion, we see that it is because it only occupies a very little place in their lives. They supplement it with interests, moods, and deeds alien or incongruous to its spirit. Practically they put it aside as soon as the mood it satisfies is passed, and they pick it up again when the mood returns. Their religion agrees with them because of the small heed they take of it. Those who try to do otherwise lose their wits in the endeavour; they are cut off from the human brotherhood even as lunatics, and we call them pietists. We do not and must not live as spiritual beings. We are animals, we are economical and political factors, we are fighters and players. In none of these capacities do we act under the impulse or according to the dictates of your governing principle. This main-spring does not work one-tenth of the wheels. Most of them work apart from it, and some of them in spite of it, and it is dishonest quibbling to ignore the fact. There is growing up in the modern world a strong young ideal that will stand no more casuistry, and that intends to respect the humble mortal frame. We cannot



restrict our relations with our fellow-creatures to a communion of souls, nor evolve the right rules of these relations out of the thoughts and moods that foster the life of the soul; we could not obey them in private life; communities and states would not last a week if they were governed on spiritual lines. No amount of spiritual perfection will people the earth with the flesh and blood in which this perfection is to flower. Yet it alone is presented as divine. And as in virtue of this superiority it is to rule over us, our whole life ethically speaking is an undignified struggle between rights that assert their independence in fact and a principle of authority that tries to find a sophistical sanction for them in unexplained animal bylaws, or looks away in ashamed silence.

Officially we have an ideal that no more clothes us than a hat can be said to clothe a man who juggles about with it nimbly, or who stands up to his neck in darkness for the sake of propriety.

This is a degrading state to live in; equally degrading for that part of us which we call our spiritual nature, and whose possible usefulness is compromised by a claim to supremacy which it cannot enforce, and for that part of our natures to which all dignity is denied because it is



neither spiritual nor conformable to spiritual ends without a lie of sanctimonious self-deceit.

BERYL.

You must have devoted your attention to very unfortunate specimens of Christian culture.

CROY.

It is very unfortunate that there should be so many of them. But even the happy specimens—and of course there are some very happy ones—do not reconcile me with it. They are better than their ideal. We want an ideal that shall add to what we have and not subtract from it, that shall clothe us with beauty from head to foot, an ideal of expansion and not of restriction. Morally it will be as it has been politically; sovereignty must pass from the leader by divine right and the minority of the would-be-wise to the mass of the nation,—greatly to the scandal of our clever mandarins who cannot understand that their cleverness, so useful in small things and particular cases, must always deceive them on the main lines and that all that learned people can do is to lead the ignorant carefully whither the ignorant bid them go, they know not why,—even as a skilful coachman obeying difficult, apparently unreasonable orders. Left to himself

the man on the box would never drive but in the park.

You have spoken of catholicity and praised it : I will meet you there. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. You know that Cardinal Newman tells us these were the words that finally broke down his allegiance to a narrower Church and drew him over to Rome. But what is Rome ? what is all Christianity but a poor half-starved schism from the catholicity of manhood ? Is commerce religion ? Science and politics and manufacturing and agriculture, the Stock Exchange and the theatre, and the turf and the ballroom, and the public-house, and fighting, and laughing, and love-making, and all the rest of it—are they scenes and incidents of the holy Mass ? If not, what is this talk of catholicity ? Is art religion ? Perhaps you will say it ought to be. So it ought, and so ought all the rest ; so is all the rest if religion means the perfect expression of the entire animal, but not if it speaks in the name of the soul. The man—what do you call him ?—who was almost persuaded to be a Christian ; what was it do you think that kept him back ? Do you suppose he was too fond of the pagan temples and their well-worn steps ? Was he deterred by the fear of giving offence to Society ? was he too lazy at

heart to change? Or did he, while listening with charmed attention and curious sympathy, hear all the time, as we do, a secret protestation: "No! This will not do for us; it may chain within you that which had best be shackled, and set free that which had best prevail, for your minds seem lovable whilst your flesh is impure and selfish; but we are innocent and friends with mankind and with nature, thanks to our animality, whilst the spiritual being within us is a creature of solitary ambition, tyrannous and fanatical. You must speak to men whose first desires are selfish like the instincts of the beast of prey, and who rise to charity through the discipline of an inward law, which only leads us to self-righteousness and pedantic pride. We cannot be Christians, because the best part of us is our animality."

Now go on. I will not interrupt you again.

CLIVE.

Would it surprise you to recognize a good many of your thoughts in what I have to read and say to you?

CROY.

It certainly would. It seems to me we stand at the antipodes. You and your writer are other worldly. I am all for this world.

CLIVE.

Perhaps you are all for this world because the other one, as generally presented, only responds to a limited portion of our nature out of which we are expected to work a general view of life that seems false to you. Perhaps you call yourself worldly because you are not spiritual. It remains to be seen if the two terms are always equivalent.

CROY.


They certainly seemed so as far as you have taken us. And I cannot guess what you have to offer us beyond this world and its wisdom, if you drop absolute morals.

CLIVE.

Let us simply follow our journal :

(*Reading.*)

XVI. *I am as one dying of inanition. I can live no longer on these thoughts. If they are the truth, the truth cannot feed man. It is a momentary stimulant, it is another kind of brandy ; it is not the bread. I am stunned as one who has fallen from a great height. I was like a man who, having climbed a solitary peak, sees nothing around him but the icy blue air, and above a dreadful splendour of fire*



*that rushes straight down on him through millions of silent miles and burns into his brain.*

*Come to me from all quarters of the heavens, thoughts that bear company and console ; pipe to me once more, dear flock of garrulous birds ; bring me a distant murmur of life !*

*It is early summer out of doors. I get its warm gusts of air and its rustling of unseen leaves. I have crept nearer to the living again and can almost hear their voices. Nearer through vain regret and fruitless desire and pity than through the thought of perfect unity. Of this pity I hardly know whether it is for myself or for them ; it is to me as though I were at the same time their father and their child,—their child, because the weakest and the poorest of them is richer than I ; their father, because I look back upon the joys that have not yet departed from them.*

*I lean my forehead against the bars of the window, and there is a languor of music abroad, and I remember a song they used to sing in France four centuries ago :*

*“I saw the fair one, my darling—imprisoned in a tower.—Would to the Virgin Mary—that I were lord thereof—and that the sun were set—and morning not yet near—and that I clasped you, dear one—flesh to flesh in my arms !—Heart, my heart, what wilt thou do ?—Thy joy is lost—*

*thy pleasure and thy toy.—Thou canst not live without her."*

CROY.

It is the simplest and most natural thing he has said yet.

GERALD.

Is that what his garrulous thoughts piped to him?

CLIVE.

Oh! they had not yet begun. Hear them awaking:

(*Reading.*)

XVII. *I have been thinking of the countless millions of men who have never conceived the universe as one gigantic will nor uplifted their self-consciousness to the dignity of a universal human type. Yet they have lived, and loved and striven. If we could wake them in their graves and tell them that they have lived in utter darkness, that there has been no escape for them from the cage of personal vanities and interests, no outlook, no background, no beauty, no joy, and that they have rotted in communionless selfishness—what would they answer? They would only smile.*

*There are voices within me that will not be subdued. There are millions of men around me*

*and splendid races of men in glorious times of history, to whom neither the word "Spiritual," nor what it stands for, is known.*

*I said to myself: "There is one state of mind of much higher value than any other; although through the imperfection of my humanity my thoughts will frequently be called in other directions, they must return to that point as the needle to the pole, and the less they swerve the truer my path. Or, granting that I am on this earth to develop all my faculties and not to confine myself to this one endeavour, yet must it everywhere accompany me as a subdued light underlying and gently shining through all my moods and actions."*

*Ah, me! I lie to myself when I profess to carry about with me any such vestal lamp. I lie to myself when I try to believe that if my faith were stronger it would be adequate to my needs. It cannot suffice because there are other truths which it ignores. However hard you may thump a note it will never sound as the full blast of symphony.*

*To-day all this inner life with its joys of companionship in a cherished ideal, its sense of the presence of God within us, its pride in a secretly tended flame destined gradually to illuminate the surrounding darkness, seems to me the futile effort to collect into one hour of consciousness the infinite and conflicting aspects of reality; an*



*effort born of a feeling of helplessness and forlornness; even as a child suddenly thrown among strangers might clasp desperately in his hand some little familiar object precious simply because familiar, with a vague sense that he could not quite lose his identity as long as he clasped his toy.*

*What have I been doing here these many weeks; whither have I wandered? I see it now; the hour is still and lucid. I have been seeking the thing that enchants, the cloak whose wearer may pass the door behind which on floors of diamond the king's daughters nightly dance—the talisman that all men covet. Who has not a prison to forget? I stand muffled in the cloak that carried me through not long ago, but the doors remain obstinately shut; and the wind that blows the vain folds about, speaks to me words of doubt and hope: "It is not true that those alone gain admittance who come clad in this garment; seek again, you whom it helps no longer."*

BERYL.

Oh, how fickle and vacillating he is!

CLIVE.

Do you know by experience what solitude means?

BERYL.

No.

CLIVE.


(Reading.)

XVIII. *"I know not if it is the weariness of my body—an unspeakable weariness these last few days—or some unsuspected cause that I must thank, but my senses are growing keener. This empty room is full of life. How must those feel who possess in plenitude gifts that are only foreshadowed in me? I cannot breathe on ceilings and make them reveal for ever the forms of sybils and prophets. I cannot scratch with my pen out of a sheet of paper music that men shall recognize in rapture as the burden they know not how to speak. My eyes are foolish and my ears forgetful. There is nothing of me and there never was anything—only this great longing, this passionate desire that refuses to descend into nothingness, that clings to the skirt of the hours as they glide by and cries to them: Abide! Abide or take me with you into the time that does not pass. Yet, foolish as they are, my ears and eyes are almost able to take me there. The forms I have looked at a thousand times are strange and new to me to-day, and sounds as familiar as the sighing of the wind, or the never*

*ceasing footfall beneath my window, are full of beautiful wonder.*

*I am beginning to think that the perfection of any sense introduces us into the company of the gods. It may be that as soon as any one of them attains a certain degree of intensity and fineness it reveals to us something that stands apart from and above the ordinary everyday world, and in presence of which our narrower self dissolves. In those rare hours when we see and forget everything to look, or hear and forget everything else as we listen, that which we see and hear is enchanted. We escape from ourselves; we are free. A lull akin to sleep has fallen on all the workshops of our brain, save on one where a kind of work-fever rages, as though at some mysterious call all the craftsmen had mustered there to forge in an hour of frenzy the sword that slays the dragon.*


*What else have they ever striven for, the teachers and the saints? Is it possible that these scorers of the flesh have been lovers of the same beauty, under another garb, as those whom they sought to reclaim? Is it possible that the thirst of immortality should be merely the perfection of a faculty more developed in them than eyesight and hearing?*



And this is the next entry :

- XIX.** *"A long-forgotten scene from my early days, a trifling scene from trifling days, has flashed before me, I know not why; and now, tell me, how comes this: the same conversation that would seem insipid if carried on by persons of our acquaintance seated around us, arrests our attention when we overhear it at the neighbouring table between persons unknown to us. It affects us as a scene from a comedy. We would like to recollect the trite phrases; the intonations are full of drollery or pathos; the faces become types of character boldly outlined; the room itself—the ordinary dining-room of a dusty roadside inn—seems to have been thought out for the occasion by a subtle artist; nothing in it is superfluous. For a few minutes the dull fumes are cleared from before our eyes; a delicate atmosphere of fiction floats around us and quickens our blunted senses. Twenty years later, perhaps, the whole scene will flash before us as fresh and vivid as at the first hour. And yet what was it? Just anyone talking with anyone, about anything, anywhere. But the persons, the words, the scene, the spectator himself, are detached from their usual surroundings; the accidents are suppressed and the type remains; the civic individuality of the speakers is unknown to us, and our ignorance of all that*

concerns them is a foil against which they stand out in the firm relief of physical evidence; our eye is all the busier with them for the silence of our memory on their score; the words suggest no particular antecedent words, they have a curious sound of general propositions disguised in particular terms—the sound of the initial line of a song—and our ear is all the busier with them for the indifference of their purport; the entire scene fits in nowhere in our life, nothing led to it, nothing results from it; it is a bit of enchanted ground somewhere over the hills and we neither know how we got there, nor how we departed; it is an affront to sober reason; it is a flower of the senses awaking while all the rest is asleep in the city of the brain. Surely this is the stuff whereof the gods are made; for what is the core of religion but a sense of the grand unfamiliarity of life? And if beauty is a powerful abstraction of lines and colours and sounds from the tangle of our everyday brain industry, what is holiness but the same abstraction at work in men whose aptitude for reflective thought is more developed than their sensuous organs? They deal not in colours and in sounds. There is no appeal to them in lines and rhythms. Having eyes they see not, and ears they hear not. But the inner world is full of mystery to them. Their moral consciousness is the



*only spot in their mind capable of that local intoxication, that concentrated activity in the midst of surrounding sleep, which is the first touch of the wing of genius ; and as soon as that touch is given, the scene that lights up before them in sudden solemn beauty is their destiny ; the room into which an atmosphere of fiction has floated is their life lifted from the dust of the road into the everlasting freshness of poetry, and the superior reality of which they have become aware, is what they call God. Let them call it so. It is right that this form of enchantment should have a distinct name as it has virtues of its own. But let it be clear that God is only a form of the divine, the God of certain memories ; that which makes him divine is the enchantment on which he arises, the chariot on which he takes his turn."*

BERYL.

This is rather startling.

GERALD.

And there is so much of it all at once that one does not know exactly where to take hold.

CROY.

He finds religion too narrow. I don't mean

this or that dogma ; I mean the temperament to which religion seems to be gradually reducing itself nowadays as the interest in dogma decreases, a general attitude towards life that can be designated as spiritual-mindedness. This was clearest to me because in this he has my sympathy.

GERALD.

Yes, there was that too. But what astonishes me is the systematic backing away of the man. He climbs as for dear life to a point whence he can look round him, but no sooner has he reached his observatory than he forgets all about the view at his feet and scrambles to a second rock whence he can observe the first, then to a third that overlooks the second, and so on. He is continually superseding himself. Will he never sit down and be quiet? Help me to express it; what is this new wrench—what is it he has put aside?

BERYL.

The best part of himself I fear.

GERALD.

Yet you know that to a good many people there is something religious in art, something akin to worship in the love of the beautiful.



BERYL.

No, I am not Greek enough to understand how the disconnected fleeting joys that art may give us—charming as they are—can be presented as a substitute for a religion that transforms and uplifts personality. Whatever beautiful forms or sounds your prisoner may see and hear, though they may help him to forget his condition and wile away the hours, how will they save him from the dispersion, the drifting hither and thither, the perpetual crumbling away he complained of so vividly at first? How will they admit him to a sense of eternity?

That we should cease to think of God and of the soul as of so-called real objects seems to me only right, because as we have seen there is another kind of reality, a formal reality that does not belong to objects at all, but is inlying in the subject and inseparable from it. Though there may be nowhere a divine thing or person, yet there may be a divine relation between things, thanks to the subject; and I want to believe that I become aware of and participate in that relation by my most intimate self-consciousness. In this manner I retain an immortal element; there is in me somewhat of the absolute. I have simply unmaterialized my faith. And I have made this exchange on the assumption of the



paramount value of the subject. It is this consideration that has enabled me to give up the idea of divine substances, more or less delicately tangible. I am defrauded if this paramount value disappears. The absolute element has gone; the divine, of which it is said to be only one of the forms, seems to me a purely human beauty, and I am left with nothing but possibly exquisite sensations to help me along in a thoroughly secular world, such as Croy would have us dwell in. I decline to dwell there.

CLIVE.

I see that we shall have to go in for a serious study of the divine.

I told Croy just now that he would recognize some of his thoughts further on. Let me, however, tell you that I repudiate as distinctly as you do the idea of a purely secular world.

BERYL.

With whom do you side then?

CLIVE.

With those who attribute an absolute value to life in the individual, but keep the guidance of life distinct therefrom as a purely secular question. With those who reject as you do the doctrine

that we live for no other object than our own pleasure or the good of the race, but who also deny that this absolute or—why not give it its old honest name—this supernatural part of our task can be identified with any belief or mood, can have any bearing on our ethics: I would disconnect it from personality.

The position you take could, it seems to me, be expressed thus :

“I believe in a self that differs and liberates me from my ordinary self. I believe in a supreme and perfect unity. I believe that my higher self is the sign of my willing and grateful participation in this unity. I do not seek either within me or without for a substance, however subtile, that shall be to these beliefs as a thing to the representation of that thing. I hold that they are evolved from the subject and that they assert just thereby a higher reality than that which can belong to any object.”

Is this correct?

BERYL.

Quite correct.

CLIVE.

Then of course, as you very justly remarked, the paramount importance of the subject is

implied in your faith in anything beyond eye and hand knowledge; and if we call personality the assertion of the higher self, personality must be the basis of your religion. A suggestion such as the one I read to you that the beliefs it supports are only one of the possible forms of religion, that God, as was stated, may be only one of the forms of the divine, must seem to you destructive of our last stronghold against a more or less refined naturalism.

I want to show you that there is another and far surer stronghold. Pray give heed to these words; I have weighed them carefully: I believe that the reality which must be opposed to the natural order does not belong to the higher self, but to the undoing of the lower one at whose cost it is made, but which may also be undone in other ways no less fraught with a more than natural reality, no less divine.

CROY.

I will engage to accept as many supernatural realities as you please if ever the words mean more to me than white blackness or black whiteness would.

BERYL.

You must make it clearer to us.

CLIVE.

I suppose I must. Have you patience to listen to an analysis of self; for that is what I shall have to go back to?

GERALD.

We have patience enough for any reasonable trials.

CLIVE.

Then suppose an organism to be nothing but a polity of cells grouped in a given fashion. Inasmuch as it is distinguishable by that fashion from the surrounding world it has a certain kind of unity entire at every separate moment. But it may also have another kind of unity of which it will never be conscious unless we concede to it some degree of memory; it will never say or think *I* if nothing that happens to it or in it leaves any trace. What we call the self of this organism depends on its memory, and it has as many selves as there are varieties of memorial traces.

To begin with: we can fancy an organism endowed with self-consciousness—thanks to a purely mechanical kind of memory—a colourless, indifferent residue of sensation;—for there is such a memory. It is as though each of the cells of the organism while performing its work

kept a silent note of its mere effort,—just as a clerk might keep an account of his pen-and-ink expenses regardless of the contents of his writings; and as though all these little bills were collected till their total became an important fact in what was hitherto an unconscious polity. As soon as this happens, as soon as all these small residues are collected into a mass important enough to be the cause of a sensation that contrasts with the ever varying flashes that pass before it, the polity has acquired a permanent self; all experiences will be referred to it and it will grow as they multiply since each of them increases it by the record of a new effort.

I need hardly add that this self is not what we usually think of in connection with that word. I have mentioned it in order to account for the persistence of the sentiment of personal identity in states of mind which from another standpoint we describe as essentially unselfish.

Our usual self is the work of another kind of memory; it is not determined by a mechanical record ever qualitatively the same and varying only in quantity, but by the particular memories of each one of us with their different contents and combinations. If you are suddenly called on to say who you are, you think of your name, of your reputation, of your work, of your friends,

of your abode, perhaps of your club or of the church to which you belong, and none of those things separately but their meeting, their intersection, is what you think of as yourself. Now they are all signs for long chapters of reminiscences whose interest and vividness decrease as they recede from the point at which they meet to form the plot. You are the plot; you are the centre, and all around in concentric circles of diminishing clearness spreads the world of outward reality, made even as you of reminiscences, but of reminiscences less closely intertwined.

I wish to lay stress on this: we live in a web of associated memories; our general map—the chart thanks to which we know more or less clearly where to put what, recognize analogies, form classes, make order out of chaos and accumulate experience—is a network of memories. And one of ourselves, the loudest voiced one, the one we usually think of when we say *I*, corresponds to the spot on that map where the most frequent and familiar memories cross each other, as the railroads of a country at its capital.

You know what happens in cases of madness and doubtless in usual cases of crime: the network is disturbed; its lines are so shifted that they no longer connect one with another, but converge immediately to an inflamed super-

sensitive self. Or they do not converge at all ; there is no concentration, nothing but a chaos of new impressions that do not know how to distribute themselves among our disordered memories.

This is the second of the three marches or systems of memory that constitute a self ; and though its process of map-making supposes at each point the exercise of a different kind of memory to which we have already alluded,—I mean though no order can be made, no classes recognized, without an act of abstraction,—yet it is as easy to distinguish the memory that connects from the memory that abstracts as a lateral from a vertical monument. The latter with the self it produces we have already examined at length.

GERALD.

You mean the abstractward march which leads intellectually to the notion of unity, and morally to that peculiar sense of self often spoken of as personality ?

CLIVE.

Exactly. What I want you now to picture to yourself, and to contrast both with our usual condition, and with the disturbance of ordinary madness or ordinary crime, is the effect produced

in the psychical polity by a change in the distribution of its forces such that the activity diffused through the great network of associated memories is suddenly concentrated in one particular tract which thus acquires a unity of its own, as would an opaque spot or knot in a diaphanous tissue. Whatever lies outside that particular tract will, as long as the surrounding sleep lasts, be forgotten, unheeded ; whilst the results of the contrasting activity will seem both *ours* on account of the persistence of the purely mechanical register of consciousness, and *impersonal* because of the silence of all those countless associations with which our usual notion of self is bound up. Our entire image of the world of phenomena and change is a work of associated memories without which we can have no notion of sequence or variation ; and when this image fades together with the self in which it is focussed, whatever we may feel in its stead, we feel under the sign of eternity.

GERALD.

Well, I see in what you have said an account of the how and whence of certain sensations ; but I don't see any proof that they correspond to a reality. Now, Beryl has a right to put aside the question of an exterior reality correlative to the thoughts and moods she calls divine, because



the source to which she traces them—the subject—is in her eyes the highest reality. But since you deny her claim, you must show some other reason why your sensations, *sub specie æternitatis*, should be anything more than any other states of mind, and why we should not apply to them the usual tests of credibility.

BERYL.

Yes ; explain this.

CLIVE.

My answer to this objection is somewhat like that of a man who meets an accusation by proving an *alibi*.

The consideration whether there exists or does not exist something exterior to you and corresponding to your sensation is quite inapplicable here because the “you,” the self relatively to which things can be exterior or interior, real or illusory, is silent ; indeed it is only, thanks to its silence, that you can have these particular sensations, and it is a serious mistake to call them before the tribunals of the very state by exodus, out of which you have reached them.


If you should suddenly see in the middle of the room a headless figure with a sword in its hand, undoubtedly the wisest thing you could do would be to subject it to a severe examination

according to approved methods in order to find out whether there really was such a figure before you, or if simply your brain was out of order. For this figure, inasmuch as it has a form and a colour and seems fraught with a meaning for you, so and so, in particular, claims to belong to the same world as your chairs and tables; it pretends to be part of that tissue out of which both your general picture of things and the self you oppose to it, are made. And your hair stands on end because this claim, though apparently warranted, does not agree with the rest of the general picture, with all your familiar map of things. The only sensible course is to test the claim. The difference between sensation and exterior reality is all-important in this case.

But there is no resemblance between this ghost and any sensation, mood or thought due—as a flower that could only blossom on rippleless waters—to the perfect quiescence of all those associations and memories out of which the ghost and the fright and the self who is frightened, are woven. The hallucination and the hallucinated ego are, both of them, products of the same big factory, and as long as that factory is at work we cannot be too scrupulous in our scrutiny of its wares nor too anxious to make sure that they have woof as well as warp.

You, Beryl, do not hold that this factory is all there is of us. If you did you would content yourself with studying its rules and earning its salary. You would not care for any of the topics we have broached to-day nor for anything whatsoever save patent, palpable, foreground success, unless you had found some egress out of this factory, unless some delight or sorrow, or passion, or mental rapture had lifted you out of it and out of what a moment before you called yourself, and made them both as things that matter not. Why, then, do you take with you into the new region a distinction which only arises and only holds in the old one? But the fact is, you do not and cannot take it with you; if you did there would be no egress, the conditions of sensation would be the same in you as before, devoid of impersonality, ignorant of eternity; you would be playing still with your own little trinkets, O fair one, not with the jewels of the crown.

It is only in after-thought when the delicate hour has passed and its recollection seeks admittance into the company of memories, that the rule of this company forces on you the inquiry: "Does there exist anything corresponding to what I felt?" A meaningless inquiry here, for the very first condition of your feeling



what you felt is the absence of the "Me" that could be opposed to it. But as soon as this self reappears, as it does the moment another screw is turned and the silenced looms begin again to weave the world of memories, you forget that outside these memories there is no distinction between an inner and an outer world, but absolute identity of him who feels and that which is felt.

GERALD.

In short, what we usually call reality, exterior reality, is bound up with one particular system of memories and the religious instinct is a protestation against the incompleteness of that system ; it gives evidence of another which of course it would be foolish to test by the rules of the former ?

The fathers of the Church said as much in other words when they put faith above reason.

CLIVE.

Yes, with this difference : they say that by one particular state of mind we have access to another world. According to the view I am defending, it is by one particular state of mind that we have access to *this* world. They hold that there is one, and only one, road to the absolute. I suggest that there is only one road out of it. They put their trust in a narrow path

that leads to God. I put mine in anything that can bar the path that leads *Hither*. To them the all-important thing is a given faith, its greatest development and constant presence in us, a moral process which we have watched and which can be best described as the triumph of personality. By this they escape from the world. To me the world as usually thought of, with its fundamental opposition of subject and object, appears and disappears, blinks into and out of existence with one particular rhythm of thought. It disappears with the dissolution of self; and personality is merely one of the possible means by which that dissolution may be effected.

You, Beryl, are afraid to question the intrinsic excellence of the moods that give you the sensation of the eternal, and I can see that you think me a dangerous sceptic because, after you have abandoned one by one the dogmas of the 'past and sought refuge in a mere temper of the heart, I refuse to look upon this refuge as the holy of holies, as a place sacred in itself, but ascribe the great worth it has for you to the exodus, the retreat from the foreground, which has taken you thither but which might as well have led you, as it leads other people, elsewhere.

I answer that the scepticism you reproach me with is the live stuff of the only religion that no

criticism can harm or doubt can scathe. For it makes religion to consist in the closing of the doors behind which doubt and criticism are distilled; not, as the Church does, in the impotency of these corrosives against certain tenets; nor, as you do, in their impotency against certain elect moods. I am willing to grant that nothing is proof against doubt, that we have not an opinion or an ideal that may not be reversed in a score or two of centuries, that what we consider true may then be deemed a superficial appearance, and what we consider right a wicked superstition;—I am willing to admit that doubt is all-corroding, and feel perfectly secure nathless. As long as you say, "This is the holy thing, this is the sacred spot," no matter how far back you may retreat, critical investigation will catch you up and retort, "There is nothing holy nor sacred here; only a juice to analyze or a vibration to measure, or an inherited association to trace back to the vulgarest wants." Yet though no one can select the spot where criticism must cease and whence we can say to it thus far and no further, mankind has persistently refused and always will refuse to admit the purely rational view of life because no amount of learning can cheat us out of the humble fact that for each of us somewhere, at some time, that view is false,

valueless, forgotten. The mechanism of this oblivion, the movement of screens within us whereby the rational world is eclipsed, the limit of the empire of reason,—this is the divine.

You asked me, Gerald, when and where our ever-roaming prisoner would sit down and rest. You might have asked the same question of the critical spirit that ever transfers its attention from opinions to the conditions of their growth and from these to the method of the inquiry, till at last it grapples with itself as the only remaining fighter on the field. Then, and only then, it can rest; it has become aware of its own insufficiency, it has torn out its own sting. They say that doubt desecrates—meaning, I suppose, that from each successive basis proposed for belief it withdraws absolute worth and supreme authority; there is nothing that it does not condition. But a thorough doubt conditions itself; it conditions the desecrator and measures his tether. Who, then, is left to say of the range beyond that it is not sacred? The faith which shall stand must be dragged from the vitals of doubt. It must be the disenthronement of the great doubter: Reason.

GERALD.

I hardly know what to say. I have no

objection to being persuaded, but you must admit that it is difficult to accept off-hand an idea as different from the current modern views as this doctrine by which the distinction between reality and mere sensation loses its general sway and is restricted to a single province of thought.

BERYL.

Tell me: in all this are you following your prisoner or striking off on your own account?

CLIVE.

Oh! he takes short cuts of his own, and I plod after him as best I can.

Listen:

(*Reading.*)

XX. *Stronger and stronger in me grows the conviction that the most important part of our work is unknown to others and unrecognized by ourselves. We speak of men who succeed and of men who fail, but in truth we know not what is success or what is failure.*

*Happiness is no test. Many have it of whom we say: "Poor people! can nothing cure you?" Goodness is no test; many bad people are worth more than good ones. Genius is but a pretty trick, and love a moment of genius. We run through*



*the list from top to bottom and what we seek is not there. Have you no other wine than this?*

*Oh, yes! there is another wine. But it cannot be asked for, for it has no name; it cannot be offered, for no vessel will hold it; it runs through the crystal of thought as brandy runs through ice. No one knows whence it comes; Ponce de Leon is sailing still in search of its enchanted vineyard. No one knows why or by whom or at what moment it will be tendered to his lips. No one knows why this hour or second was perfect, imperishable, evidently superhuman, and not so the one before it or the one after. There are men who for years have prayed daily in hopes of meeting once again the flash which is never forgotten; others who pursue woman after woman as though they were lifting up masks in quest of a face once seen; and some who work furiously, and some who cross their arms and wait. But neither prayer nor pleasure nor work nor patience can summon the silent and certain message that something of us has been tossed aloft and garnered in for ever.*

*Nothing can compel the consciousness that some small part of our work, for reasons unknown to us, has soared beyond destruction. Who shall say why? It was perhaps not our best work, to judge by our usual tests, nor perhaps a great work,*

*nor perhaps a good work. It was perhaps a moment of despair, or of joy, or of passion, or of kindness; perhaps almost nothing—a sight, a sound, a dream. It was perhaps a sin by the official catalogue.*

*But as a child drops a coin in the money box his big friend keeps for him, so have we flung that stray moment into eternity, beyond the sun and the stars.*

## BERYL.

He leaves us the money box at least. Much of what you have said and read impresses me. But, oh, the uncomfortable feeling of it sometimes and the sense of bewilderment! What am I to lean on? or may I not lean at all? I listen, and approve, and rejoice; and the next moment I am alarmed or stunned by the taunt that I am but a spiritual pharisee and that it makes but the small difference of a little more or a little less coarseness whether we clutch with our drowning fingers the rod of the law or the hand of a Friend. Yet we want something to take hold of and rely on; something we can turn to in hours of difficulty; if not Levitical prescriptions nor yet the hard and fast dogmas of any Church, at least a definite hope that shall bear us always in the same direction, haven-ward. But this astonishing faith, born of doubt as you tell us, seems

to speed one forth in any direction with the cheerful cry: "Every road leads to Rome," as though we all of us took Rome with us on the soles of our shoes. It is the very reverse of all the evangels we have been taught to respect for the definite aims they assign to our endeavour.

I shall never quarrel completely with a man who feels as keenly as this one does, that there is something behind the show, but there is in me the distress of an offended ideal that protests against the feeling of a superior reality being turned into a ferment of moral anarchy ;—for that is what he is leading us to.

CLIVE.

If by anarchy you mean, as many people do, the denial of all superiority, the word does not apply here. You admit that in what I have read and said there is the clear recognition of a divine side to life. But if you mean a denial of supremacy I accept the charge ; and I ask you to weigh this difference.

The difference between a person who rests content with things superior, and a person who needs to go further and recognize something supreme, consists in this, that the former does not deem it possible to assign any particular

aspect or limit to the manifestations of that which he accepts as superior ; in fact he believes that its ultimate nature eludes representation in any terms of consciousness, that he cannot at any single moment grasp anything deeper than one of its protean masks. What he denies is the king's claim such as it used to be,—incarnate ; the sovereignty he believes in is diffused through the nation. He is practically a polyarchist.

But you are as one who believes that sovereignty must be concentrated in one person, and that somewhere in the crowd, recognized by your heart as he passes, even though his face be hidden, walks the true Harun al Rashid. To you, divine means supreme because in your psychical workshops the abstractward march of memories happens to play the part of the local craft that stops the looms of the big factory, suspends its output of associations and during their abeyance throws forth sensations that transcend self and time.

In language of political imagery, the knowledge of things sacred has been in your case what the conquest of a national consciousness has been with certain nations : a long discipline of centralization ; and you stand where those stand who say : No king no nation ; a Cæsar or barbarity. You endow the end you have achieved with qualities proper to the instrument with

which you have achieved it. And the confusion is the more natural from this curious complicating fact, that our abstractward march of memories can produce by its own merits, and independently of the part it may play in the organism as means of emancipation from the world, feelings which are as a reduced copy of those due to the emancipation itself. The last term of a progression towards the unique and the supreme will seem to those who have reached it so immeasurably above everything else that it is as another world over this one and from which this one hangs; it is not the highest peak of nature, it is the supernatural.

I am speaking of the adventures of the moralist as well as of those of the metaphysician.

It comes then to this: the sense of the divine may originate in three distinct manners. It may be due to the process we have compared to the interruption of the work of a big factory, and in that case I hold its value to be the one absolute thing in life.

Or it may be due solely to the activity of one particular little loom without any interruption of the others. In that case it is a counterfeit as far as the divine is concerned; whatever value it may have is exactly of the same order as all our other worldly chattels: thus churches become useful as social and political institutions.

Lastly it may be due to the combined action of the two causes we have considered separately: When this is the case, when the march of memories which leads directly to the love of unity and supremacy, and through these to a counterfeit sensation of the divine, also gives the genuine sensation thereof, thanks to the interrupting silencing part it plays in the brain, a confusion is almost inevitable between religion which reveals a further reality, and ethics which exalts a nearer one. The worship is monistic and has been so since the days of Plato, who first made this mistake. I will tell you what it is like: it is as though a child brought up in a cellar seized a heavy lamp and made use of it to force open the door; anything harder than tender fingers would have done as well, and revealed the landscape; but the child turns gratefully to his lamp and believes that without it there would be neither liberty for him nor light for the world. He thanks the wick and oil of the lamp for a service rendered by the weight of its bronze.

You thank your notions of unity and supremacy for a sense of sacredness due to the push that removes the screen on which self and not self are painted as distinct.

Here you have, writ short, the radical error of European philosophy: the supernatural element

in the individual is either denied or connoted. Those who deny it make of us boarders in a hygienic establishment where we are to exercise our muscles and observe our diet to no other end than to ward off decay a few days more. Or they tell us that we are purely social beings, feeding and breeding for the public weal—an assumption as arbitrary as those of any theogony. They who on the other hand rightly affirm that there is a reality beyond hygiene and sociology, but who qualify that reality, are forced at the same time to qualify the means by which we have access to it. Their theology turns into absolute ethics. The love of duty for its own sake, the acceptance of an immutable governing principle, the endeavour to stifle or tame all impulses that disturb the chastening of the inner life, cease to be praised as signs of a particular talent: they become in the eyes of these people the very doors of heaven, not to cross which is to remain the worm of a day. Their blame falls on the millions who live merely by instinct and by an unconscious adjustment to surroundings, not as a friendly suggestion that a more complete development might reveal unsuspected treasures of thought and feeling, but as a condemnation to eternal nothingness.

CROY.

Even so. It is fraught with the odium of a resented sacrilege because it is hurled at men who live, badly or well, without the guidance of a moral self, by men whose religion has dwindled from a conception of reality to a morality of self-restraint, and who, however they may write or pronounce the word, inwardly spell God in the same way as "don't."

GERALD.

Yes, I suppose it was some such train of thought that led your prisoner to say that our most precious hours might sometimes, from the usual standpoint, be open to condemnation. For "don't" is so necessary a word both for private and social use that those who have a difficulty in finding it in their vocabulary are pretty sure to bring themselves and others into trouble sooner or later. But you and he are looking at things from so very unusual a standpoint that perhaps you disclaim this practical canon.

I don't know if I have correctly apprehended the general drift of your ideas, but I fancy that when fully developed they would fashion themselves into a system of two spheres to each of which we belong in part: a worldly and a trans-



cent sphere. You find that the former cannot give us a clue to the meaning of the drama of life and death, whilst the second can. It is true that you speak of the second one as though it were reducible in last analysis to a case of circulation of the brain, but you also speak of the former, that is to say, of this world, inclusive of course of our brain, as of an intermittent eclipse of the other world. The reality of the two terms is equal, for neither is real save by the absence of the other.

There is a strong flavour of manicheism here. You have used such terms as polyarchy or polytheism, but ultimately you are a dualist, for this is what governs all your thoughts through their many bends and twists : the conviction that man belongs to two irreducible worlds as correlative and incompatible as yes and no. Your pluralism merely concerns the forms under which one of your two terms can assert itself ; any way in which it can get the mastery over the other is in your eyes good from the religious standpoint. Even the belief in a supreme unity will answer your purpose, thanks to the conditions of its genesis, but you quarrel with it as soon as detached from these conditions it is prized for its contents and enthroned in the sovereignty it claims. Hence you plead alternately for and

against it, according as you are considering it uprising or its sway, the apotheosis or the god; and there rings through all you say on the subject a perplexing sound, as of a toast in honour of the introduction of a unique god into the pantheon.

Well, manicheism has had its try. At one moment it almost conquered the world. Yet it was defeated. Of course you can say that it was badly defended, badly stated. You are free to renew the attempt.

Where is your prisoner going to lead us now?

CLIVE.

(*Reading.*)

**XXI.** *I awoke in the middle of the night and heard the sighing of the wind. Even so, I thought, my life is passing away. A little rustling in the dark; a little traceless rustling. Then a great yearning pained me as when I used to think of those by whom I am forgotten; the pain of one lying in his blood and who dares not stir but waits and listens if perchance someone is coming who will bear his farewell message. But there was nothing save silence and gloom and the passing of the wind.*

*Thus minutes or hours went by, and all the time the yearning grew wilder, till it grew so wild that at last it tore itself away from me. It rose and soared off, and its place was filled with peace. The room was not cheerless any more, but companionable, as with the haze of morning and the twitter of swallows.*

*Then I said to myself: these many years I have longed to master a secret so precious that its possession should grace life and make death worth dying. Now behold! in this very moment I am outliving death. Give me but this thrill of eternity and I quit you of the rest. What, then, is the creed that works this wonder? Where is my philosopher's stone, my magic pebble? I have none. I have no secret. I have nothing. Only the sorrow of my wasted life, only something that overwhelms and stuns me to rest, something mighty enough to break away from me, perfect enough to need me no more, to shake me off and endure for ever. But not in me; and only for ever because not in me. If I seek to retain it and mingle it again with my substance by egress from which it was divine, it forthwith loses its divinity. It must not be retained. It passes and wanders on to others who are waiting in desolation, as I waited. Perhaps it will return to me with the same face as to-night, sublimely*

*sad. Perhaps as a rapture of joy that will sweep me away, or as some unwordable storm suddenly hushed to the pipe of the thrush. I cannot clasp it or name it; the very memories it leaves in me will hide it from me as long as I cling to them. As soon as I bow down to it, it vanishes. I am as one to whom a child has been born, God by the mystery and delight of his birth, man as soon as born. I may adore his advent; I may not adore him. I may not pin my worship to the cloak of any Saviour. Who are our Saviours? There is one here with me to-night whose name is sorrow. Others are elsewhere under other names or nameless. They claim no bondage from us; they make no list of chosen souls. They stroll amid the human throng, indifferent to whom and what they touch, and whatever they have touched is eternal. This hour that is with me now will endure for ever; it has always been. Others have felt just what I now feel, and to the end of time someone will be there in whom it will thrill with the self-same unvarying thrill. It will not be buried with me. It has fallen on me like a drop of the fabulous river whose waters made men invulnerable, and by so much of me as it has touched do I escape destruction. By that much I am everyone.*

*This was in the middle of the night while the*

*wind rustled at the casement. Then I said to myself: Can nothing of it all be of good to others? Can I not send them a farewell message, scatter it on leaves to the wind, or engrave it in blood on the stones? If I were set free and could speak to men with a voice that they heard, what should I have to say?*

*I would proclaim unconditioned salvation to man. Others have stood forth and said, Believe this or that and your faith will save you; it will show you the meaning and the reward of life; but without this faith there is neither meaning nor reward. I say that your beliefs and your disbeliefs matter no more than your nationality or the colour of your hair.*

*Others again have said: Behave thus or thus and it shall fare well with you. Perhaps it may. But my pity and my love go out to those who do not behave as the teachers bid them, nor ever will. And I say: There is a greater reward than any which the teachers can warrant; they might teach you to lead a decorous life, help you to learn the rules of the game, show you how to succeed in it. But the profit of the game itself, that which makes it worth playing-at at all, even to those who succeed best, this they can neither grant nor refuse; you bear it in yourselves, unalienably, whether you succeed or fail.*

*No man lives in vain. Even if he should have done more harm than good to his fellow-creatures, even if he be shut off from them in perpetual solitude, nevertheless, though his days be barrenness and his end decrepitude and pain, whatever may have been his creed, whatever the favourite haunts of his heart, he has achieved some work that cannot be undone, he is more than paid for his trouble. Some know it and depart in peace; others know it not and murmur. The only service we can render them is to show them that they have received a splendid salary. Their character and their instincts we can never change, no more than we can change the blood of their ancestors. Their creeds indeed we can influence sometimes, but these matter no more than the fashion of their clothes. The only message we can bring them of any worth is that of their success, a success inherent in the mechanism of their life and which nothing can take from them, but which consciousness can raise to beatitude.*

*We are full of immortality. But it dwells not in the beauty of our moral person; it stirs and glitters in us under the crust of self, like a gleam of sirens under the ice, and any blow which breaks this crust brings us into the company of the eternal ones whom to feel is to be they. That blow you will surely strike somehow, you who live and die.*

*The film you have spread you will likewise rend; surely, surely, you must slip into heaven. There is no rule of divine conduct, no text-book of enchantments. Say if you will, that they are always the same, one under many forms. Call them disguises of the emancipator. This you may do, but you cannot prescribe to him the method of your emancipation. He tears the veil as he chooses, with dawn rose fingers of adoration and fiery fingers of enthusiasm, but also with the scarlet hand of passion and the livid hand of death.*

*Then in the faint grey morning I heard a sound as of distant surf, I breathed a breath of the ocean, and it seemed to me that I was as a doomed ship whose crew—a motley crew of hopes and thoughts and passions—had suddenly recollected that they could not drown, but would surely reappear and, drenched with the brine of oblivion, man some new craft, putting their pride again in some gallant ship of self till its sails too hang in rotten shreds, and pitiful timbers give way once more.*

GERALD.

Ah!

I see the compassion that underlies all this, but I confess it puzzles me how you are going to make it work.

There are very strong reasons why we should treat as one and answer with a single answer the two questions which you try to keep distinct : "Why do we live," and "How shall we live best."

You know the line of argument urged by many prudent people. They say : "If we make the justification of life independent of the fashion of life, men reconciled with their lot will be incurious of improvement ; they will be content to live badly, giving free rein to ferocious or stultifying instincts ; considerations of far-sighted policy will not touch them nor promises of more subtle enjoyment. They will stick to their native coarseness and quietly reply to our exhortations : This is good enough for me. Even the hand of the law will not lead them. There are many places where it cannot reach, and where it does reach they will slip through its fingers or openly defy it ; its ministers themselves will not care to enforce it ; the muscles of the secular arm hang impotent if you cut its spiritual nerve. There must be an absolute sanction to the law behind the relative sanction of expediency. We must hold men by the most powerful dread and the most inspiring hope man knows : the dread of an absolute ultimate loss that shall sweep away as dust all his little earnings of pleasure ; the hope



of an ultimate absolute gain that will repay all his momentary sacrifices."

I don't say that the argument convinces me. I think it overrates the influence of beliefs on conduct and underrates our natural love of skill which men will always admire as well in general conduct as in special performances. Though somewhat faint the whisper of wisdom is persistent and persuasive in the long run, and in default of the trumpet of the Last Judgment we could turn our hopes towards education that sharpens the hearing to less impressive but less distant blasts. We could argue without too much disadvantage against the lawless, on purely secular grounds. After all it is not proved that what we call right is not simply the will of a permanently overwhelming majority, and only appears right to us for that reason.

But you have not taken your position on secular grounds. We could walk there with tolerable safety, but under your guidance are we not in much greater danger?

You begin by making me feel that neither my individual prosperity nor the good of the commonwealth can account to me satisfactorily for my own presence; you knock them down with the query of ultimate value, which the secularist forgets or ignores; in other words you rouse the

religious instinct and degrade expediency from its exalted position. There we stand then before the religious question as in the Supreme Court, and we anxiously await its decision, for according to the purport thereof the counsels of expediency which you have shorn of their glory will be left in their diminished authority to teach as best they can the love and respect of organization both within us and around us, or on the contrary they will suddenly be raised to the thousandth power, sealed with the seal of the absolute.

You read us a strange decision. How now are we to argue with the lawless if they can turn on us and say: "The one absolute profit of life is ours as well as yours; as for the rest we are not so dainty and we leave you the two birds that chirp in the bush of wisdom. You have neither arguments nor arms against us. What can you do? Social disgrace? We will steel our nerves till we rather glory in it. The gallows? Well, you too must die. A little sooner or a little later it does not much matter. Meanwhile we intend to have a good time of it. We are bound like you to the Holy Land, but we mean to sail there under the Jolly Roger. *Au revoir.*

BERYL.

Exactly!

GERALD.

Upon my word I cannot swear that they are wrong if Clive is right. I should feel safer under the shelter of Croy's wings—or, I beg pardon, his roof. Either let us be content with this world, such as it is, and let us strive to make the best of it without the assistance of any supernatural background; or else, if you come to us with a mystery, let it do what its predecessor did; let it put the dignity of the infinite in the humblest effort of duty, and the terror of destruction in the best concealed misdeed. Even if the working power of the doctrine be overrated and its practical efficacy smaller than supposed, yet what remains we cannot afford to treat with disdain. What mankind cares for is efficacy. That is the misfortune of subtle speculations and psychological niceties; the greater their accuracy the more worthless they may be. The really intelligent man is the practical sociologist who has taken the measure of his own littleness as an isolated being, and would be no more content to burrow to the end of his own personal ideas and feelings than you or I would be willing to return to the days of our early babyhood, when our interest was centred on our gums and abdominal contrivances. There is a revelation your solitary thinkers rarely get at, for it is a jump out of introspection; I

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mean the revelation of a social organism compared to which the individual is but as a mote in the sun, a speck of dust in a flock of stars. He who has felt this will strive to take leave of his solitude even at the cost of his fine quality of thinking. The persons around him gradually cease to be types and illustrations of his theories—agreeable impersonations of his favourite fancies or outrages on his superior taste; they become wheels and screws in a most complicated piece of machinery to which he belongs as a minute part, and the question is no longer to him: "What do I think," but "What do they need."

CROY.

Not a very honest question.

GERALD.

Quite honest if disinterested.

And again there is another consideration. The point we are discussing is this: assuming there is a background to life, must that background be specified in such a manner that our thoughts concerning it may act on us as incentives and restraints on the foreground, or must we admit that the two planes are distinct and independent so that we pass from the nearer to the further one

by means which have nothing to do with the rules of proper conduct on the former.

Now even if those who say that we must connect the two, and corroborate one by the other, are mistaken, even if the great monistic scheme is an illusion, the illusion is so beautiful that in listening to your criticism I fall to wondering whether mankind can renounce, whether it is desirable that it should renounce, this fascinating dream of virtue co-substantial with eternity. For, apart from practical reasons, it may be the poem of our race and times, the song that gladdens the prose of our civilization. Just as you say that there is in the individual a march of memories towards abstraction and unity, so too may society possibly need a class of men whose business it is to affirm one end, one law, one reality, and to perform this astounding feat of explaining with a single answer life and its negation.

The class I allude to may be the one to which you, together with all men capable of systematic thinking, ought to belong. It may be that your endeavour is suicidal, and that in trying to reason out a dual answer to the problem you are warping an instrument which was intended to fashion unity on the pattern of its own self-consciousness. Your attempt may be unprofessional.

CROY.

Hang the profession. Hang systematic thinkers. They are the bane of the world. As for the practical worth of your one law system, it simply has none. It is a designer's delight, the plan of an imaginary city painted on the walls of a real one that does not resemble it in the least. "Put the dignity of the infinite in the humblest effort of duty and the terror of destruction in the best concealed misdeed." Ah, if you could do that, then indeed ! But you can do no such thing. You can only put the idea of infinity in the idea of duty, and the idea of destruction in the idea of iniquity. Now as long as we are handling ideas, speculating on ethics, these associations may be very gratifying. But when it comes to buckling down to bitter duty or to living through the hunger of temptation, a harmony of notions is of no avail because it is not with notions that we can get through our task, nor against notions that we are struggling. The trouble is elsewhere, in another part of our nature which your conceptual subsumptions can in no wise affect ; no more than ague can be cured by a verse of the qorān written on a slate and then washed off into a cup of water that the patient drinks. Your definitions cannot change the fibre of a vapid, wandering brain ; the utmost they can do is to make your

fool cry; and then you have a wet fool instead of a dry one.

The tempted man is quite ready to admit the equation between destruction and unrighteousness. "Very true" he will nod, and burn as fiercely as before with greed, or lust, or hatred. Equations don't put out fire.

BERYL.

But it is not an equation; it is a feeling, a passionate feeling.

CROY.

Ah, there we come to the distinction between those who believe with the head, and those who believe with the heart.

BERYL.

Well, why not? Many people give a verbal assent who have not really understood.

CROY.

Those whom you describe as having really understood, are simply those who bring with them strength of character and richness of instincts. They are neither blown about like feathers, nor blinded by partial aspects. They are alive to the entire situation and firm in their grasp of it. They are people whose conduct

would be just the same without the sanction which you seek for it in the background because their sense of the foreground is complex and sure.

Of course you can instance thousands of people who will affirm that they walk straight because their principles have a religious or a metaphysical sanction. In so far as they mean that mere dry calculation of visible profits and losses would not avail, they are right. But they forget heredity and education and the instinctive sympathy by which well-constituted men unconsciously take into account a multitude of factors in the problem of proper conduct that escape the hard conscious stare of the would-be-shrewd calculator. All the world-wide difference between the cleverness of an egotist who knows the value of respectability, and the generous humanhood of a nature nourished by innumerable delicate roots, is credited to the supposed efficacy of the sanction accidentally believed in by the latter. But subtract; the roots, subtract the education and the heredity and the fine grain of perception, leaving only the principles and a firm belief that they are either laid down by God Himself or worked out of the absolute, supersensible element in man, and what do you get? Just the people who are said to believe with the head and not with the heart, people whose assent is



unwavering in a fundamental identity between virtue and an eternal profit of some kind, and who yet behave as though they were rudderless; or worse still, people who put all the fanaticism of their coarse natures at the service of their principles, and manage to fill their corner of the world with gloom in the name of everlasting light.

The promise of favour in high places and the threat of sovereign displeasure cannot bring to life the quivering, responsive, inventive flesh of kindness: there is no name for the forms they summon up in its place, aged yet immature, unreal yet inflexible as the arm of the inquisition, passionate and yet icy as the blackest frost of Calvinism. Of course if the living flesh is there to begin with, neither promise nor threat will injure it. All around us there are exemplary people growing under, and convinced that they could not grow without those promises and those threats, attributing their conduct to their belief and the virtue of their belief to the sanction you claim for it. Give us their roots and I will accept your sanction. Until then I repudiate it as useless when not pernicious.

CLIVE.

Let me read you another passage,—almost the

last of my extracts. It may help us to an understanding.

(*Reading.*)

XII. *I have been thinking much, these many silent days, and things have grown clear to me that I had not seen before. Chiefly this: the extent and the limits of my failure. Its limits, for he cannot be called entirely defeated who is willing to die, not to put an end to his troubles but because he has become aware that part of him will escape death. Its extent, because after all, the conquest of eternity is only a part of our entire task. I, who without it would be empty-handed, will certainly not make light of this part. But I will not either, as dusk draws near, lie to the setting sun and deny the greatness of the tasks left unachieved. Aye, and unattempted. It is too late now; the end too near; the solitude irrevocable.*

*We were not made only to master death but also to tame wild life and caress it into beauty. We were made for the plenitude of our form in which beat many hearts. Not I, but the pure elements liberated by rapture from the tangle of me, this is what will last. What then? Then I am a fragment and the entirety is in the many. Then, too, I am made for a work of love that shall constitute outside and around me the unity which*



. . . if you refuse to call it a principle. This instinct is to have sway over our conduct, to guide us in this world, in short to fashion our Self, whilst our accounts with the other world are to be settled by moments of extasy. Very well; but these two tasks which you are so anxious to keep distinct, the conquest of eternity or of the consciousness of eternity, and the guidance of life, why should we not look upon them as two halves of one task? why should we not connect them in a single act of love and see in our own "plenitude" an image of their unity?

CLIVE.

I don't see why you should not. I think you have a perfect right to do so, for acts of love can connect contrasting terms and superinduce unity without destroying their opposition. I told you some time ago that we should possibly work round again to the idea of unity, but that it would be a different kind of unity from the one we forsook. So it is. What we forsook was a unity of law such that to live well in this world was to attain something of a more than worldly worth, something having an imperishable, absolute value, while to live badly was not merely stupid or coarse or mordid, but sacrilegious. What

we have arrived at is a unity similar to that of a drama in which contrasting, irreducible scenes are comprised; an unspeakable unity that cannot be focussed in thought; if it could there would be no drama but an illustrated aphorism like one of Æsop's fables.

The ruling principle against which I have protested is one which smudges religion and morality into a single colour. If we accept it, we must either be mere citizens without anything equivalent to a soul, or essentially souls provisionally afflicted with bodies. In this case, the sense and dignity of all our efforts, that which gives them coherence and lastingness, depends on the subjection of the inferior part of our nature to the superior spiritual principle; right and legitimacy flow from above, from a higher one in each of us and from a Highest One above us all, and above everything. It is the autocratic system in philosophy.

According to the view we have now under consideration, the moral unity of the individual is rejected as basis or keystone of our religious and ethical culture, and is accepted only as one of the means by which we can sometimes achieve emancipation from the individual self and individual selfishness. This emancipation is the religious, the absolute element in life, and if we

admit it as such, we stand further from materialism than any believer in a future kingdom. But it gives us no rule of conduct, no canon of right and wrong. What it can perhaps do is to make us feel keenly that we are fragments of the true moral unity which we will then seek not in ourselves, but around us. It may possibly lead us to an ethical socialism in which right and wrong can be clearly determined, and can be very grave things, but secular things. Our doubts and struggles will be decided by reference, not to principles, but to persons; real evil will mean a violation of animal sympathy, and imaginary evil departures from a spiritually, and only spiritually, evolved ideal.

In reply to you, Gerald, I admit that a doctrine which connects the absolute value of life with the dissolution of self, though it accounts admirably for death, would, alone and by itself, be dangerous to the living. It must be distinctly understood that what I have read you—save the last passage—does not concern the guidance of life. Naturally enough. A man in prison has very little life to guide, and his thoughts run perforce in the direction our thoughts always take when life recedes from us.

As for you, Croy, I think your views of morality are sound enough, but you are less

competent in religion. You are insolently healthy. Wait till you are knocked on the head. Our prisoner, you see, has been knocked on the head; and perhaps when I read you his last words you will think he has lost his wits. In truth there is a sound of self-affirmation in them which is rather puzzling. But I take it that he is speaking in the first person out of some grammatical necessity or convenience and really purports to speak in any and everybody's name.

BERYL.

Wait a minute. Let me ask one question more. You give us two worlds and bid us seek extasy for admittance to one of them and fellowship for guidance in the other. These two worlds, as I understand you, cannot be viewed simultaneously; they blink as you say into and out of existence alternately. And in fact nothing as much as human fellowship gives us a sense of the intense reality of all that surrounds us. When it quickens we start as one waking from a dream. And rapture on the other hand is nothing if it is not a fainting away of all this reality and a sense of something that transcends it. The two seem to exclude one another. Well, I am very sorry for you, but I want them both together.

CROY.

Womanlike.

CLIVE.


Yes, and within given bounds, not without reason. There are flashes of consciousness in which the two worlds commingle; for instance, moments of love or of enthusiasm, moments of heroism. It is as though we caught sight simultaneously for a brief instant of the two different coloured lights of a revolving lighthouse: they may blend together for the wink of an eye. And if we choose we may consider this fusion as a symbol of the oneness of the mechanism by which the two different, irreducible lights revolve. In this sense it does not deceive us. It would, if we tried on the strength of it to reduce the two lights to one.

Just as by the persistence of images on the retina the happenings of two successive moments are often fused in a single impression, so there are times when we feel as though in rising we had lifted the world with us and our balloon dragged the cities of the earth as parachute. This experience confirms you in the disposition to think of goodness and religion as one in essence. Doubtless they are both necessary to the perfect life. But what has the perfect life to



do here ? We are asking why we live at all, badly or well. Will you assign as final cause to the life of all men the high quality of the life of some ?

I perceive that there is a constant source of misunderstanding between us : your thoughts always revert to the perfect life, mine to the imperfect ; you think of the chosen, I of the rejected. I do not say that people whose interest is in the knowledge and attainment of the perfect life are pursuing a shadow. Though their effort can never—and they are the first to recognize it—be completely achieved, yet it embodies a strong and beautiful passion ; it is one of the human crafts and those who join the guild have a fellowship in it and a function by it. They do not pretend to achieve absolute success, yet they can succeed even as an artist whose ideal is greater than his works, and yet his works are great. But as they can be said to succeed, so too from the same standpoint must others be said to fail who have never sought the perfect life, or seeking it have sought in vain. What becomes of these ? When we ask this question we are sometimes met with the proud rejoinder that such people do not count, that they have not attained to the human estate, and that having merely vegetated they will merely rot. Surely this is an uncharitable and somewhat flippant reply reminding one of the axiom



laid down by some Austrian nobleman that humanity begins at barons. A view commendable for its drollery but deficient in other respects. No ! if we put the religious value of life in the achievement of a certain kind of life, we must offer new and endless chances of success to those who fail in this their first existence and who may fail again an indefinite number of times. We must offer them purgatory or reincarnation.

For two things, on close examination, will prove to be inseparably connected: the qualification of God, as when we say that he is goodness and can only be approached by goodness, and the persistence after death of the separate individual self until it is redeemed by the birth of the other self or personality which is the presence of that God in us, and from the conditions of the growth of which we have deduced his qualification. Now if the belief in the persistence of an individual self after death finds true acceptance in you, I mean if it is neither forced on you by tradition nor clutched at as an escape out of logical difficulties, if it sounds as an echo to your dearest thoughts, I have nothing to offer you; you have all you need for your personal use. All I can urge is that your scheme will not satisfy everybody,

because there are people in whose opinion to identify in essence the good and the divine is not to raise the good but to lower the divine ; people whose religious instinct—the instinct that cries in the question, “Why all this and what is there behind it ?”—will always demand that the whole mass of inner adjustments of the human group should be referred to another order of facts. If there be any such order of facts it must perforce be such that distinctions or contrasts valid in the first instance disappear and make place to a new analysis. It is so whenever we pass from one interest to another said to underlie it ; explanation ceases in such cases to be the connection of facts of the same order and the determination of their import in that class ; it becomes the discovery of facts in reference to which the former data (ethical judgments in the case we have in view) lose every vestige of their previous significance and assume a new one.

The religious instinct of the people I am speaking of is a craving for the maximum of delight that attends these passages from one plane to another. They will never consent to mingle the two, and so great is their dread of this flattening down of the two worlds into one, that supreme unity towards which your thoughts

and aspirations turn will seem to them a thing of silence that may be indicated in sequences lived through, but can never be really grasped in any single moment of thought or feeling.

I see, too, that you shrink from me as from one tainted with what our fathers would have called the antinomian heresy. Well, antinomianism is a detestable doctrine; not because it brushes away the law of God and makes religion independent thereof—so far it has my sympathies; but because it contains no recognition of any other law, save perhaps that which the courts enforce. This is quite insufficient. A mixture of divine intoxication and jural legality may give very poor results; and when unbalanced mystics take legislation into their own hands, it may end as badly as in the city of God at Munster in the times of John of Leyden.

But you know that to-day there are many among the thoughtful who believe in a moral law not sacred in the religious sense, not supernatural, not absolute, and yet as binding as though it were backed by the angel's sword or argued out of the supposed nature of ideation, as imperious as the want to make use of a gift is to those who are gifted. As I told you before, it has not been my intention to speak of this the ethical gift. I simply point in the same direction

as so many of our contemporaries, and believe as they do that the fountain-head of true virtue is a naturally evolved instinct of fellowship, an altruism traceable to the animal. At the same time there is no doubt that with this main stream others have blended, due to that particular march of memories which we have seen culminating in Personality. The discussion of the contents of ethics would take us far from our subject. Let me pass with only two remarks; first, that the admission of spiritual elements does not put ethics on any supernatural basis, since there is nothing supernatural in the spiritual process itself, but only in the extasy of which it is one of the possible provocations; and secondly, that though there may be points of contact between self-dispersion which is religion, and altruism which is morality, yet we may not jump to the conclusion that a fundamental unity of the two could be expressed by some term opposed to egotism. It would only be a verbal synthesis; all self-dispersion is not altruistic, and all altruism is not self-dispersing—from it.

BERYL.

It is strange how frightened you are of the notion of unity.

## CLIVE.

Not strange if you are anxious, as I am, to retain the supernatural and think, as I do, that it must inevitably be dislodged sooner or later from any fixed abode we may assign to it. I don't want you to revile unity; I want you to place it further back, beyond the reach of words; I want you not to endanger the divine by pinning it to goodness, for goodness will assuredly turn out to be of natural origin and growth. We shall have a science of it and its sacredness will be gone. I am not afraid of robbing goodness of its divine character; goodness *farà da se*. It is the other that is in danger. I am afraid of the flatness of soul we shall sink to, if we forget the worship of unreason, and accept a teaching which makes mystery harmonious. It may give us light and sweetness, it may fashion a very lady-like humanity; it will never give us passion, nor the shudder of tragedy; it will never make us hungry for death.

Not the thought as in the doctrine of faith—believe this or that, nor the deed as in the doctrine of works—do this or that, nor yet again a connoted sensation valued for its contents as in the doctrine of the mystics—feel this or that; but a performance—thought, deed or sensation, denotable by its relation to, or function in, the

organism, an exody, an egress from the incomplete reality bound up with the notion of self—this is what I mean by religion. It is an egress whose whence and whither will vary as selfishness varies, the same thing being emancipation to some and thralldom to others. The same doors are of horn, or of ivory, according to the hand that pushes them open, and lead to the deepest dungeon, or to the starry battlements.

Of course it matters little whether, thinking of the exody, we speak of the divine as one, or thinking of the doors speak of the gods as many. It suffices that there be hours that interrupt the mechanism whereby we are we, in a world distinct from us,—hours that we can only speak of and describe as we describe any natural phenomenon, since to speak of them is to start the machine again, and which, when dragged into its play, must assume the aspect of unsubstantiated sensations, but which while they last make of that mechanism the great illusion. And we must cease from asking ourselves what is the value of these thrills. Are they only vain though exquisite moods, or are they the highest realities? They are both turn-about. There is no standpoint from which they can be judged once for all and classed above or below their opposite. When we are in them, or they in us,

the rest is nothing, and those who know them will silently answer the most magisterial oracles of reason with a smile which, if it were to take sound, would doubtless say, "Ah, poor prig," even as the psalmist said in other words. When they have passed we resume our place in the huge machine, the world claims us instantly, our thoughts hook on to each other in the same order as before, the same round of habits fill the day, the same things are in the same places, the same people in the same relations, the same roar of wheels and furnaces repeat the same burden: "this is reality, reality, reality; all else is but a dream." Then the acceptance of this world and of the conditions of effective work in this world become the test of manliness; any misgiving as to its ultimate value we impatiently set aside as the feeble groan of some dejected ecclesiast or the wine and love song of some belated voluptuary. Yet the very next minute perhaps, the blow is upon us: a single breath of passion has brought out the word pedantry across each page of the gospel of wisdom; or Jack-in-the-box has flung back the lid of the coffin and stretched out his fleshless arms—"time is up, come in here, come and discuss with me the triumph of organization." For all this wonderful co-ordination of instincts within the




individual, and of thoughts within systems and of men within communities only registers half the wealth of life ; we exist partly in this scheme and by its laws, partly in opposition thereto, in virtue of facts which can neither be rationally motivated nor socially marshalled : hours of defiant faith, deeds of passion, flashes of intuition, works that unbuilt up do not crumble, unorganized do not decay, transcendent facts, crumbs of eternity that defy destruction as do the incorruptible atoms, and elude synthesis,— gods by the side of God.

Here are the prisoner's last words :

(*Reading.*)

XXIII. *Now my struggle is over ; the time has come and my choice is made. I abandon to destruction the unity of which I am conscious ; I take refuge in the lastingness of its elements. I bid farewell for ever to the transient meeting of eternal guests who had gathered here for an hour ; they are taking leave of one another and never perhaps throughout the course of ages will they meet again, all of them and none but they, under one same roof. I hear them overhead moving to depart, and the sound of their several footfalls quiver through me in sweet bitter shudders. I hear the flight of the divine vultures that bear away my substance shred*



*by shred; the wind of their wings is as ice on my forehead and from I know not where wells into my eyes the tranquil glory of a boundless sunset.*

*What are they waiting for, the departing guests? Only a word that shall set them free. Go, then; pass on, immortal ones. And, behold, I burst the bonds that pent you up within me, I disband myself and travel on for ever in your scattered paths. Wheresoever you are, there shall I be. I survive in you. I set my ineffaceable stamp upon the womb of time. I am whatever I have felt, and what I have felt is what some must ever feel. For years I have been conning my lesson, learning to say: not me, not mine; ashamed both of sorrow and of joy till they slowly were lifted from within me and stretched overhead, endless and unchangeable as the milky-way whose soft light descends indifferently on all men from generation to generation. My hopes have become an heirloom of the centuries which it is my turn to take care of; my thoughts are here on deposit for a little while; they have been passed round since the dawn of time and someone else will have charge of them to-morrow; the laughter I have laughed rose in the bulrushes of yore and mingled with the sound of the syrx; the kisses that have wandered to my lips will never grow cold; no hearts but mine shall ever ache and*

*leap. My passions are the tingling blood of mankind. Now someone says to me : It is well so far ; taste also the death. Then let there be banners and music ; this is no leave-taking ; I am not even going home. I thank you, days of hope and pride ; I thank you, lamentable solitude, and you, shades of those that loved me. I sorrow with you, grieving ones, and melt with you, O fond ones. I triumph with those who vanquish and I rest with those who are dead. I descend to my fathers and return again for ever. I have nothing that is mine but a name, and I bow down in my dream of a day to the life eternal. I am the joy and the sorrow, the mirth and the pride ; the love, the silence, and the song. I am the thought. I am the soul. I am the home.*

GERALD.

Oh ! shut that manuscript. I think Beryl is overtired.

CROY.

But, you silly child ! you must not believe all that is told you. I dare say he has not descended to his fathers at all. I dare say he is in just as good health as Clive.

BERYL.

Oh! never mind me. It is not what you think I am not at all unhappy. I was only thinking of something. Please go on.

CLIVE.

It is finished.

GERALD.

Clive, I will give you my general impression in a few days.

CROY.

For heaven's sake don't give it now. We are exhausted. Look what a lovely evening it is! Let us row across the lake.

CLIVE.

Yes, come! And Beryl shall hum to us, as she did the other evening, the song of some old Flemish Master. Orlando . . . something.

BERYL.

Orlando Lassus.

CLIVE.

Just so.

*THE END.*



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